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MODERN DEMOCRACY

BY

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Professor of History

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I.

MODERN DEMOCRACY

IT is a shortsighted though not uncommon view to attribute to the Great War the universal crisis, economic, political, spiritual, which now confronts the world. No one of course will think of minimising the terrible destruction, moral and physical, which it brought on mankind. Yet the Great War did not create the crisis in our civilization, but multiplied, concentrated, and brought to the surface tendencies which existed long before it. Thus the Great War served to show in what direction Europe was drifting or was being driven and how perilously unstable was the towering superstructure of our newly mechanised and industrialised civilization. The mood of post-war Europe was a strange blend of disillusionment, revolutionary optimism, sensationalism and violence, above all, violence. It was the Great War which carried the cult of force, power, violence from the abstract plane of 19-century philosophy and science into the life of the average man. The carnage of 1914-18 and the blood bath that followed it in Soviet Russia were the first fruits of the Nietzschean gospel of the superman, of the Darwinian law of animal survival, and of the Marxian doctrine of the class war. These doctrines came alive for the average man. For the most important fact about the Great War was that it put nearly the whole adult population of Europe to school to violence on a colossal scale. It was inevitable that in the aftermath of disappointment and misery men would proceed to question the foundations of a civilization which had made such a catastrophe possible; and that, hardened in the use of violence, they would soon pass from criticism to revolution.

Criticism naturally concentrated on the two great and inter-related movements of industrial capitalism and liberal democracy which had come to maturity during the 19th century, and which appeared until the Great War as the natural state of civilised mankind. Forty years ago democracy was taken for granted by almost everybody; a man

would have been laughed at if he had suggested that the principles of liberty and democracy would shortly be challenged and would, in fact, be abandoned by one great nation after another within less than half a century. Nevertheless, the post-war period saw the rapid spread of two criticisms of democracy, one coming from the Left, the other from the Right. Both had their roots in the 19th century. It was the Great War that brought them to a head. The first declared democracy to be only a half-way house, a mixture of capitalism and socialism, whose final destination was fated to be communism. Hence liberals as well as socialists looked for salvation to the Soviet regime established in Russia after 1917.

The pioneers of Bolshevism were unimpeachably Marxist in their ideas. Lenin expected an immediate world revolution, and like Marx expected the early disappearance of the state in Russia. There could be no place for that "parasite on society," as Marx described the state, in the classless communist society. The state dictatorship of the proletariat was, it is true, regarded as a temporary necessity; necessary for the purpose of destroying the bourgeoisie, but once that was achieved, the State would be a meaningless and superfluous institution. It would, in the classic formula of Marx and Engels, "wither away." But revolutions have usually a ruthless way with the utopian ideals by which they are set in motion, and the Russian revolution was no exception. So far from disappearing the Russian state developed into the most highly centralised, dictatorial and militaristic type of state known to history, and thus the outcome of the first communist revolution proved to be the exact opposite of what Lenin as well as Marx intended it to be. Never perhaps has a revolution so signally reneged and refuted itself as the communist one.

The second criticism of democracy was partly a reaction against Bolshevism and partly a development of tendencies which date from the early 19th century. Its rejection of democracy was even more absolute than that of communism. It repudiated the principles of the French revolution and the whole tradition of nineteenth-century liberalism as based upon a false philosophy and a false estimate of human nature. This new anti-liberal creed was at once more logical and more dynamic than the creed of communism and it has embodied itself in the formidable Nazi and Fascist regimes.

A significant feature of the present situation is that Bolshevism alone stands for a complete breach with the traditional elements which

persist in greater or less degree in the nations which once belonged to christendom. But not less significant is the fact that, with the exception of the revolution in Catholic Spain, the revolutionary movements look to the past rather to pagan than to christian sources of inspiration.

Up to quite recently the terms of the historical problem were regarded as simple. There was revolution and reaction, and revolution was regarded as inevitably the victor. It is only now we are beginning to realise that what is called reaction may indeed be the most extreme form of revolution. The Spanish revolution is an example. Here we have a movement, especially in Carlism, which has repudiated the nineteenth-century far more decisively than either Communism, Nazism, or Fascism ; in fact, it is the only contemporary revolutionary movement which has gone completely off at a tangent from the industrialised and mechanised world as it is ; and therefore, despite appearances, it stands for a more radical transformation of society than anything dreamt of in the philosophy of Stalin or Hitler. Consequently, if we are to understand the revolutionary rivals of Bolshevism we must not allow ourselves to be duped by the conventional liberal socialist interpretation of them as artificial movements of social reaction created and financed by land owners and industrialists. We must see them as they are, as real revolutionary upheavals, and recognise that what we are witnessing is not merely the old struggle of progress versus reaction in terms of which socialists and liberals are accustomed to explain the meaning of history. We are witnessing a series of revolutions, two of which at least are at war with one another. For in essence the so-called reactionary fascist movements are far more revolutionary than communism, and the logic of events proves that communism has no answer to them.

There can be little doubt that communism as such is on the retreat and outside Russia has everywhere been beaten at its own revolutionary game. The reason for the defeat of communism by fascism wherever there has been a real trial of strength between them is not far to seek. Like communism, fascism rests on the demand of the masses for the solution of their economic and political problems. For instance, the impoverishment of the German people partly as a result of the world depression of 1929-31 accentuated by the incredibly shortsighted policy of the Great Powers was the major cause of the rise to power of Hitler. Moreover in the highly organised

nations of the West the fascist appeal to the masses has proved to be far more effective than that of communism, because fascism harnessed itself to national and traditional forces, and boldly proclaimed man to be a national animal, the product of the national history. By comparison communism was something alien and cosmopolitan and in its appeal to the class war appeared a murderous and destructive thing.

It is surprising that Marx should have failed to foresee that the middle classes might refuse to be driven like sheep to the slaughter, that there was no reason why they could not take over and even improve on the Marxian technique of revolution and beat Marx at his own game and with his own weapons. This is precisely what has happened. In fact, it was inevitable that the highly organised nations would react vigorously against the threat to their existence inseparable from class war, for the methods which, by 1922-23, had brought Russian society so near to dissolution that Lenin himself was obliged to recognise the necessity of reversing engines, which he did in the New Economic Policy, were bound to prove fatal if applied to the complicated and sensitive organism of the type of industrialised society to be found in the West. From the history of communist experiments we learn that a society has to be extremely primitive to be able to afford the luxury of revolution à la Marx, and even in such cases the luxury is usually found to be too expensive. As for highly organised and industrialised communities, the cost is definitely prohibitive. The path to the promised heaven on earth lies only too plainly through the hell on earth of civil war and famine and vandalism. At no time or in no conditions is it conceivable that the majority of workers would enter deliberately on such a path. Generally speaking, workers in all countries, if left to themselves, have shown an invincible reluctance to accept the ferocious logic of the class war. How otherwise is it possible to explain that without as much as turning a hair the mass of workers organised by the communists transferred their allegiance from Marxism to national socialism in Germany. Much the same thing seems to have happened in Italy.

Nowadays we hear much of the division of the world into democracies on the one hand and totalitarian states on the other, the implication being that they are mutually exclusive. There is little, if any foundation for this belief which is so widespread in the Anglo-Saxon countries. For if government by the consent of the governed

is the first condition of democracy there is no reason why this condition should not exist in a totalitarian state. We know that in fact it does exist both in Italy and Germany. Consent is consent no matter how given, whether through the medium of the ballot box or through plebiscites and mass demonstrations. And in either case it may be equally free or unfree. All the evidence goes to show that the governments of Italy and Germany rest on the free consent of the great majority of the people, that they are no less enthusiastically devoted to their respective leaders and institutions than are, for example, the majority of the people of the United States to Roosevelt and republican institutions.

In view of the persistence of the classification of contemporary states in terms of totalitarianism and democracy it is necessary to insist that such a classification is tendentious and historically unjustifiable. The Italy of Mussolini, which is certainly the least totalitarian of the states so called, is nevertheless responsible for the classic definition of totalitarianism. In 1925 Mussolini stated the doctrine with imperial brevity "All for the State, nothing against the State, nothing outside the State. The State contains all antinomies. It is totalitarian." As christians we reject such a political philosophy, but that is beside the point in considering whether Mussolini's regime is or is not democratic. What we cannot doubt is that the fascist ideal and system of government commands the enthusiastic support of the majority of the Italian people. The same is probably true of Hitler's regime, whether or not we think it a bad regime. Because they are popular, both regimes are entitled to describe themselves and to be described as democracies, and indeed in some respects they come nearer to democracy, if by democracy we mean a system in which the people are vitally and voluntarily incorporated, than the so-called liberal democracies. Both claim to stand for the rights of the majority and the sovereignty of the people as a whole over all particular and separate interests. Both use the mechanism of the state to the utmost, and it is this practicable employment of the mechanism of the state really or ostensibly for the purpose of organising and carrying out the will of the people that is the common ground of Bolshevism, Nazism and Fascism. In this matter the latter are logically carrying out their own first principle which exalts the nation-state above all other values, personal or international, whereas just as clearly communism has reneged its own first principle which rejects the state.

Nor is this the only matter which sets Stalin's Russia in a class apart from its totalitarian rivals. Regarded solely from the standpoint of democracy, there is in Russia a remarkable absence of the popular enthusiasm and support for the regime which is to be found in a high degree in Germany and in Italy. It is difficult to ascertain the true situation in a country which is hermetically sealed against the outside world ; but the evidence such as it is suggests that on any estimate in which the peasants are included a majority of the Russian people may be taken as at least passively hostile to the regime under which they are compelled to live. On the other hand, the majority of industrial workers are, to all outward appearances, comparatively content with their lot which they know to be vastly superior to that of their more numerous country cousins. It would seem that the Russian Revolution by throwing open careers to men of talent and ambition has to that extent popularised itself. Not that it is a land of either peace or plenty ; the standard of living of the working class is, it is generally agreed, no higher than that before the War while since the death of Lenin an absolute despotism has progressively consolidated itself by means of terror and delation almost without parallel in history. There is, on the other hand, no lack of evidence as to conditions in Italy and Germany, and in the light of this evidence it would be absurd to say that these states possess a less democratic character than that possessed, say, by revolutionary France after 1789. All three are singularly alike ; all have the character of fierce mass movements and all are equally intolerant of dissent. All are outstanding examples of Demos in action. They represent, one may say, the crude alcohol of democracy, but for all their crudity it is impossible not to recognise their popular and democratic character.

The exponents of liberal democracy make the mistake of ignoring the all-important fact that democracy is not something given once for all, something as unvarying as a mathematical formula. There are degrees of democracy just as there are degrees of despotism. After all, it is by degree that all things are determined. The difference between good and bad government, between free and tyrannical government, is mainly a question of degree. Nor is this all. Too often we forget one of the commonest facts of history, namely, that democracy can resolve itself into tyranny, and monarchy or aristocracy can be quite compatible with a high degree of freedom. These

political terms are often mere labels and only a simpleton judges the quality of a thing by the label attached to it. In any system of government it is men and principles that matter most. From long historical experience we know that the form of government and the name by which it is called are of very little consequence compared with the character of the men by which it is worked and the principles which actuate them. It may be a commonplace but it has none the less become necessary to insist as against the word-worship and nominalism with which so much modern political thought is infected that the principles of a government are more important than its form, and that democracy, being no exception to this rule, will be good or bad, desirable or undesirable, according to the philosophy of life which it expresses.

The modern tendency to concentrate on the forms of democracy and to ignore its content, to set up a cult of democracy for its own sake, is like the cult of art for art's sake an entirely false tendency. It is worth while, in this context, to discuss some of the chief difficulties of the theory of formal democracy. Like so many conceptions in everyday use it will be found to be anything but as simple as we think it to be. Few words have been used in so many senses. Literally, democracy is *rule by the people*. But this definition does not carry us very far. We have already had occasion to note that Nazi Germany is a clear case of democracy in this elementary sense of the word. In fact, it would be easy to multiply examples from history which, by this elementary criterion, mean that despotism is often found in combination with democracy. Was Henry VIII. democrat as well as despot? If it could be shown that he had the support of the majority of the English people in his policy for the destruction of the Catholic Church the answer would have to be in the affirmative. Whatever doubt there may be about Henry's claim to be a democrat, none at all exists as to Cromwell's right to that title during his dictatorship from 1653 to his death. One might go on multiplying instances of this kind. In fact, the majority of military dictatorships from Jengis Khan to Napoleon Bonaparte possess by reason of their basis in popular support the credentials of an elementary type of democracy.

As regards the more highly differentiated type of democracy let us consider Abraham Lincoln's famous definition :—"Government of the people, by the people and for the people."

Government of the people is a tautology, a needless repetition, for a government that is a government at all is government of the people. Every government is government of the people and can never be anything else unless, of course, there should emerge from the human race the species of demigods, or supermen, which used to be so prominent in the prophecies of George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells. The advent of supermen, like Herr Hitler, has, however, brought about a heavy slump in the philosophy of the superman, especially in Anglo-Saxon countries. The superman, it would seem, has been indefinitely postponed.

As regards government for the people, all government, good, bad, or indifferent, claims to be that. The implication is of course that government should exist for the good of the people. The trouble is that every government will, without the slightest hesitation, award itself full marks in this respect. In the absence of an objective standard of morality, such as Catholicism applies to the whole of humanity without distinction of race, colour, time or place, such terms as "good," "interest" and so on, have no definite meaning. They vary in meaning and value in a more arbitrary fashion than the currencies of different countries. This being so, people will differ as to what they consider to be the good of the people according to their philosophy of life, so that what seems good to one may seem bad to the other and *vice versa*. Therefore, not only will government for the people mean different things for different persons but it will be possible to say of the democratic as of any other form of government that at a given time it has ceased to be for the good or in the interests of the people. Many will hold, for example, that the Great War was the negation and not the salvation of democracy, that government for the people is plainly a contradiction in terms if it entails the death or mutilation of millions of citizens. There is then no government which is not open to the charge of being fundamentally or at some time or other contrary to rather than in the interests of the people. The truth is that outside Catholicism with its coherent philosophy of life and therefore with its universally applicable standard of what constitutes good government, the formula government for the people has no definite meaning. It is susceptible of an endless variety of interpretations, as may be seen from the conflict of "ideologies" raging in the world around us.

I suppose there has never existed a clearer case of government of the people and for the people than the Jesuit government of Paraguay in the 17th and 18th century. But was it a democracy? The usual reply will be that it was a paternal system of government, that it was not government by the people. Is this then the touch stone of democracy, the true inwardness of Lincoln's dictum? It would seem so. For Lincoln it was not sufficient for a government to possess the assent of the people, as for example, the Jesuits did in Paraguay in the eighteenth century, or as to-day Hitler or Mussolini command the assent of their respective peoples. In fine, the acid test of democracy is the rule of men by themselves, the presumption being that the people as a whole can and should direct the process of government.

Government by the people, the government of men by themselves and such like expressions common to the political vocabulary of the theorist and the man in the street are ambiguous in their simplicity. Therefore, they are as often as not the cause of much confusion of thought and in consequence of much evil in practice. On reflection it will be evident that government by the people in the strict meaning of the term is impossible in a community much larger than a village or small town, and in a large state is neither physically, much less psychologically, possible, and could only result in confusion and anarchy if it were attempted. The history of Swiss democracy in no wise lessens the force of these considerations, for at the time that direct self-government, that is, government by the people was practiced in Switzerland, it was not one Republic but a Federation of Republics. The conditions of life in Switzerland in the late Middle Ages made it possible to decentralise political power to a degree which under modern conditions would be impossible. The citizens met at popular assemblies or *Landesgemeinde* which acted as the legislative and executive authority of communities which by our standards were not much larger than villages. This indeed was government by the people and for the people. But what was possible in a confederation decentralised in politics while united in culture and religion is clearly out of the question in thickly populated communities, even in such countries as ours where an advanced degree of decentralisation fortunately happens to be still a practical proposition.

It may be remarked in passing that the liberal and socialist devotees of democracy have no more use for Swiss democracy than they have for the democracies of Holland, Belgium or Ireland. For although the

oldest of the democracies, Switzerland is a land of well divided property and strong religious faith. For these neo-democrats the prerequisites of democracy are collectivism and atheism, so that it is not Switzerland but the highly centralised oligarchy of Stalin that they held up for our admiration as the model democracy.

Government by the people is under modern conditions a myth for the sufficient reason that where the population is large government is a function which must needs be performed by a combination of experts and representatives, who, however selected, constitute only a fraction of the people. Direct self-government being impossible, the next best thing is government by delegation. The people choose representatives who, it is presumed, will govern according to their wishes. The departure is a fundamental one, for the moment the system of delegation or representation comes into force direct self-government ceases to be possible. This was the paradox which baffled Rousseau and caused him to say in one of the lucid intervals of his famous *Social Contract*: "In the strict sense of the word, real democracy never was and never will be." He recognised the self-evident truth that in the nature of things democracy can never be more than an approximation.

Hence, except in the rarest cases, historically democracy has always assumed a representative character, and since representation entails selection in circumstances in which the factors of wealth and propaganda are brought into play, the representative democracies have shown an inherent tendency towards oligarchy. To such an extent has the ruling class or group become the deciding factor not only in government but in the choice of governments that a socialist critic of representative democracy goes so far as to affirm not without some show of reason: "In proportion as the mass of the citizens who possess political rights increases, and the number of selected rulers increases, the actual power is concentrated and becomes the monopoly of a smaller and smaller group of individuals."

This generalisation is an exaggeration of a truth which may be stated thus. Where political power is centralised the representative system is liable to become debased, a class of professional politicians is created, power is abused for party purposes, and as nothing matters much to the average politician except politics or economics he undervalues and tends to lose contact with the intellectual, cultural and spiritual forces which lie on a deeper level than politics or

economics. Then the representative political system tends to be sterile. The most various and ingenious electoral and constitutional methods have been devised for the purpose of keeping parliament in living contact with the life of the people. Amongst these are the extension of the suffrage to all citizens, proportional representation, the plebiscite, the initiative, the referendum, etc. Doubtless by these methods the basis of popular government has been considerably widened, though it by no means follows that the quality of government has been thereby improved. For, as we had already occasion to emphasise, democracy is far from possessing a monopoly of good government which, as a matter of historical fact, is compatible with the most various forms of government ranging from the most autocratic to the most democratic. It may fairly be argued that the present German government has at least as wide a basis of popular support as that of any government in the world to-day. Its democratic character is in this sense unquestionable. The combination of some degree of popular control with popular assent does, however, raise democracy to a higher level. If only on this account democracies such as, for example, Switzerland, or Holland, or Ireland, where popular control is, in greater or less degree, a reality and not a fiction, can fairly claim to possess a definite superiority over the gregarious mass type of democracy which is to be found in present-day Germany.

How valuable a possession are free speech, a free press and the other attributes of formal democracy we shall know if we ever lose them. But neither should we make a religion of them nor of the system of responsible parliamentary government in the form in which we have taken it over from Great Britain. Insistence on these factors to the exclusion of the ends for which they are intended is the surest way to bring them into discredit. After all, these are merely external forms into which may be breathed a spirit of life or of death. What is the philosophy of life, the conception of society and human nature behind the movement of modern democracy? Here we come to the vital point. For it is not by votes or constitutions or parliaments but by their philosophy of life that rulers and ruled are bound together in a common purpose and common tasks.

The democracy out of which the parliamentary representative system evolved was the great religious democracy of the Middle Ages. Its spirit was christian through and through. Not so with modern democracy, which is spiritually the child of the French Revolution.

In fact, the utopian and humanistic conception of the rights of man formulated in 1789 may be taken as a convenient point from which to date the liberal movement that dominated the 19th century, while the ancestry of the communal and totalitarian democracies of to-day is undoubtedly to be traced to the methods and ideas of the victorious Jacobins in 1793-94. The French Revolution provides us with a sort of dress rehearsal of the actual drama of democracy as it unfolded itself in the 19th and 20th centuries. For just as the first fine careless rapture of 1789 gradually gave way to the ruthless reign of terror of 1792-95, so the optimistic liberalism of the 19th century has gradually given way in the present century to ruthless militarism and dictatorship.

In 1793 the revolutionaries breathed a spirit of fire and vengeance against their opponents, internal and external. "We will have liberty if we have to go down to the tomb for it," declared St. Just in a phrase worthy of the firebrands of modern anarchism. And this new and apocalyptic spirit finds its most perfect expression in the doctrine of "liberty, equality, fraternity," to which the revolutionaries added the significant alternative *ou la mort*. However abominable the reign of terror established by Robespierre and Danton, the principles of liberty, equality, fraternity which they set themselves to achieve, and which by their terrorist methods they inevitably negated, must nevertheless be recognised to possess an element of grandeur and of truth. For these principles sum up by thesis, antithesis and synthesis the social problem of modern times.

The existence in alliance or side by side in the French Revolution of the bourgeois liberal and collectivist totalitarian conceptions of democracy is reflected in the struggle between Girondins and Jacobins. The latter, it is true, gained the upper hand. But the struggle of ideas went on, and the Girondins had their revenge in the 19th century. For Benjamin Constant, Michelet, and Victor Hugo revived and passed on the tradition, of which Madame Roland and Condorcet were the protomartyrs. But the 20th century has seen the Jacobin tradition regain its ascendancy and Lenin, Hitler and Mussolini renew the methods of Danton, Robespierre and Napoleon. For it is worthy of note that Napoleon began his career as a Jacobin and never ceased to regard himself as the embodiment of the revolution.

The author of the revolutionary formula liberty, equality,

fraternity is not known. But whoever he was he hit upon a comprehensive definition of democracy, a definition which appealed to every school of political thought. Liberals singled out the principle of liberty and took their stand on the rights of the individual and the freedom of private opinion and private interests, while collectivists singled out the principle of equality and asserted the supremacy of the community over all individual rights and interests. But both looked forward to a radical transformation of the world with a passionate expectation which was something entirely new in politics. Politics was about to become a religion, except in England, where the sobriety of the national temperament combined with the constitutional tradition of English Parliamentaryism to resist this new and dangerous spirit. Not until our own days has England lost her immunity in this respect.

A remarkable feature of the development of the notions of liberty and equality has been their development to the exclusion of the third term of the revolutionary triad, fraternity. From the French revolution down to our own day by common consent the principle fraternity has been ignored. At no time does it seem to have occurred to the revolutionaries that liberty, equality and fraternity must either stand or fall together or that in the neglect of the principle of fraternity is to be found a main cause of the failure of the modern ideal of democracy. The difficulty is, of course, to reconcile the violence inherent in revolution with fraternity. Clearly, no reconciliation is possible. The doctrine are contradictory. There was for a while a certain amount of lip service to the ideal of fraternity, but that was all. For the most part the leaders of the Continental movement of democracy were anti-Catholic and revolutionary in outlook. As revolutionaries they were committed to the extreme of violence. It had got into their blood. The followers of the anarchist, Bakunin, learned to cultivate violence for its own sake. In this they resemble the extreme militarists, providing a remarkable illustration of how extremes of doctrine meet, and proving that ultimately both are part of the same horrible worship of Moloch which is threatening to destroy civilization.

By a strange fatality the fraternity they despised provided the real key to the problem, for the opposition between liberty and equality has to be transcended to be resolved, and only by means of the spiritual action of fraternity is such a consummation possible, if indeed such a perfection of social life is at all possible on this earth.

It is remarkable with what unanimity the political thinkers of the 19th century, other than Catholics, ignored this problem of the opposition between liberty and equality. This oversight is all the more remarkable when we bear in mind that they had before them the example of liberal England, which showed that where liberty is taken as the guiding principle the tendency is towards the most extreme contrasts of wealth and poverty, privilege and abasement, towards the creation of a society whose essential characteristic is inequality of position and opportunity. When we come to consider the matter it is evident that liberty is an aristocratic principle, that in view of the ineradicable natural differences between men in point of health, intelligence, etc., unrestricted liberty cannot but breed new inequalities and accentuate the old ones. Therefore, the society in which the action of individual liberty is unrestricted will be aristocratic in its social and economic structure as was the industrial England which was the model Marx had in mind when he wrote his indictment of capitalism. There is nothing fortuitous in the fact that where the emphasis is laid entirely on liberty, as was the case in 19th century England, the outcome should have been the creation of a society aristocratic through and through, aristocratic in its political and economic structure, and aristocratic in its individualism and its insistence on the privacy of religious and cultural life. The Englishman's home was his castle, but what proportion of Englishmen lived in castles? And even to-day what country accumulates at one pole such dazzling wealth and luxury and at the other such dreariness and mediocrity? Doubtless conditions in England are immeasurably superior, immeasurably less unequal than those in Soviet Russia. The fact remains, however, that despite the external forms of democracy England remains substantially what she was in the 19th century, essentially an oligarchy, though, it is true, an oligarchy that has steadily grown more enlightened and benevolent towards its own people. Otherwise the balance of power has not been sensibly altered in the direction of democracy.

This is one of the outstanding facts of the life of liberal democracies such as Great Britain and the United States of America, which no student of history can afford to ignore, though it is only too easy for the student brought up in the Anglo-Saxon school of political thought to ignore it. As Christopher Dawson has remarked, the suggestion that liberalism is bound up with an aristocratic or

plutocratic regime and philosophy of life appears somewhat of a paradox to the average Englishman. Accustomed to regard parliamentary institutions as the essence of democracy, he therefore takes for granted the democratic character of liberalism. The founders of historic liberalism had no such illusions. Not only were thinkers like Benjamin Constant and Guizot, Macaulay and Gladstone aristocratic rather than democratic in their temper of mind, but their political philosophy was likewise aristocratic. Like Dean Inge to-day they disliked King Demos, and, dreading his primitive habits and the menace which he presented to the constitutional principles they cherished, their liberalism was essentially an aristocratic and conservative product. By a strange irony, it has been left to the Italian philosopher, Benedetto Croce, to sing the swan song of Continental liberalism, and it is noteworthy that he not only insists on the essential distinction between liberalism and democracy, but contrasts them with one another as two rival systems and creeds.

The revolutionary movement which started in 1798 has now come full circle with the Bolshevik revolution. But who will say that we are nearer to the achievement of liberty, equality, fraternity than when first revolutionary democracy inscribed these watchwords on its banners? Liberty which was tried out in the great liberal experiment of 19th century England has, as we have seen, produced aristocracy, or, to be more precise, *plutocracy in liberty*. While the result of the communist experiment in equality has proved to be equally disappointing: while it lasted it produced *equality in slavery*, and now that Stalin has turned away from communism, presumably because he considers it unworkable, Russia is back again in the grip of an oligarchy of a more extreme and centralised type than any known to history.

The Russian experiment has served a useful purpose in exploding the myth of absolute equality. As was to be expected, the theory of government by all resolved itself in practice into government by one. Stalin has therefore his uses; he stands a living and irrefutable witness to the utter collapse of Marxism. In this connection the following remarks by the French philosopher, Emile Faguet, go straight to the heart of the problem: "Equality exists only under despotism because despotism makes equality, and because equality likewise produces despotism—and maintains it. Every democracy has a tendency towards despotism, not out of desire but out of necessity."

If liberty and equality are contradictory, and one term excludes the possibility of the other, it would appear at first sight as if democracy was really impaled on the horns of a dilemma. The dilemma may be stated thus : a society of equals cannot be at one and the same time a society of freemen. If this were true we would have no other choice than the choice between liberty which excludes the possibility of equality and equality which excludes the possibility of liberty. As a matter of fact, neither one nor the other would be available in the pure state. What we would get is a hybrid society in which liberty would be the privilege of the few and servitude the common lot. In other words, the outcome would be oligarchy in varying degrees and forms. It might be barbarous as in Russia or enlightened as in England, but the one thing such a society would not be in any real sense of the word is a democracy. In point of historical fact, it is towards this goal that all the great societies have been converging during the past hundred years.

The most remarkable feature of the situation is that the dilemma in which democracy is caught need never have arisen, and it has arisen only because the main movement of modern democracy turned its back on christianity. Liberty and equality are reconcilable in terms of fraternity. There was, however, little likelihood that in its headlong gadarene descent into mechanised barbarism our western society would renounce the cult of revolution or the worship of wealth, which would have entailed posing the problem in religious terms.

For fraternity is in its essence central to christianity. Without the fatherhood of God the brotherhood of men is a meaningless abstraction. The Greeks who arrived by the exercise of reason and the natural virtues at so many of the truths revealed in their fullness in the christian revelation were conscious of the identity of men. Aristotle taught that the specific quality which distinguished the human species from all other species was the same in every member of the human race. Men were men in virtue of the essential human quality common to them all. There was in this doctrine, it seems to me, a glimmer of the christian revelation of the infinite value of each human soul in virtue of which men are made, as it were, equal in the sight of God. But nothing could better illustrate the profound difference between the Greek and Christian outlook than that Aristotle, for all his metaphysical beliefs, should have remained a slave owner, thereby denying in practice the equality of men which he affirmed in theory.

It was christianity which rescued mankind from a spiritual slavery deeper than any slavery on the physical plane and affirmed its equality before God. Let me quote in this connection an eloquent passage from *A Study of History* by the historian, Toynbee : "In the eyes of the medieval Western Christian, when he looked abroad upon the World, the Heathen, wandering unkempt in the wilderness, were neither incurably clean nor irretrievably lost. Potentially they were Christians like himself ; and he looked forward to a time when all the lost sheep would be gathered into the fold. Indeed he looked forward to this with assurance as the fore-ordained consummation of terrestrial history, the fulfilment of God's purpose in the World. In this spirit, medieval Western artists used to portray one of the three Magi as a Negro. How different from the spirit in which the white-skinned Western Protestant of modern times regards his black-skinned convert. The convert may have found spiritual salvation in the White Man's faith ; he may have acquired the White Man's culture and learnt to speak his language with the tongue of an angel ; he may have become an adept in the White Man's economic technique, and yet it profits him nothing so long as he has not changed his skin. Surely he can retort that it profits the White Man nothing to understand all mysteries and all knowledge and have skill so that he can move mountains, so long as he has not charity."

It is idle to look to humanitarianism for any true or lasting conception of fraternity. All that it can do is to prolong the agony. For a radical cure the drastic remedy of supernatural religion is necessary and indeed it might be argued that by diverting attention and energy to purely secular remedies humanitarianism has done more harm than good. After all, humanitarianism is a part of the general attempt to organise human life on a purely humanistic basis, without reference to the source and end of life in divinity, which is precisely what lies at the root of all modern disorder. All of us have cause to know how imperfect our human nature is. The man who believes himself to be all perfect is a megalomaniac and is a danger to himself and to his fellow men. Who is there who does not know the strength of hate, cupidity, lust, all those evil passions which separate men from one another, and who knowing their destructive power can believe in the possibility of a fraternal love, capable of overcoming them unless it be rooted in the source of all

love? As Maritain has said : " There is no more revolutionary idea than to propose to men as their first law that they must love one another." It used to be the tendency to deny the existence of evil and the mere mention of the Evil One used to be regarded a subject for amusement. Times have changed and it has ceased to be the fashion among non-Christian intellectuals to close their eyes to the reality of evil, all too compelling a fact now that the world is night and day preparing for an orgy of universal destruction. No doubt this increasing awareness on the part of non-Catholic thinkers of the nature of the world as it really is represents a big advance on the puerile optimism of half a century ago, but there is something pitiable in the belief which goes with this new awareness that it is enough to talk politely but firmly to the devil in order to make him mend his ways. The powers of evil are not so easily domesticated. It has ever been the teaching of the Catholic Church that only the power of God himself is strong enough to overthrow the power of the Evil One.

What are christians to say and do in the present situation? Whatever happens there is one thing they may not do. It must never enter their heads to despair of the redemptive power of christianity, that christianity which even from the purely human point of view is still the source from which flow the vital energies of our westernised civilization and to which still belongs the task of determining its destiny. Either western society must rechristianise itself or it will lapse into slavery and perish as so many of the civilisations of antiquity have perished.

" The world is full of christian truths run wild." This is one of G. K. Chesterton's wisest sayings, and no doubt he was of opinion that christian truths in the wild state are more dangerous than those which have never known christianity at all. The implacable attitude towards heresy which distinguishes the Catholic Church from all other christian groups is a recognition of the power to fascinate and to subvert possessed in the highest degree by those truths, which, although in their origin christian, have become through rebellion half truths. Precisely because they combine truth with error they are doubly virulent. Nor is this all. What belongs to the natural order shares with all natural things their mortality, their passing and vulnerable character. But whatever has belonged to christianity contains a spark of immortality. The power of the half truths of christianity consists in the fact that the

christian element in them is in a sense inalienable. Wrenched from their divine setting, perverted, fallen into corruption, nevertheless they retain some faint reflection of heavenly beauty. Like the fallen angels they possess demoniac power. What we must not forget, however, is that truths fallen from christianity can be restored to christianity. There is no room for pessimism in this respect. That supreme optimist, G. K. Chesterton, devoted his best energies to the task of recovering those christian truths that had gone astray and were wandering in the wilderness of paganism. The extraordinary success of his intellectual apostolate he himself believed to be in some measure due to the fact that whatever christianity has sanctified cannot be wholly lost to christianity. By looking back to the time when England was a christian nation he knew he was looking forward. He knew also that it is of the essence of the finite human world that nothing is irrevocable, nothing fatally determined, nothing beyond redemption. Only in the world beyond time and space are there lost causes and souls beyond redemption. In infinity alone is it impossible to break the seal of good or evil. Where there is finity and free will there is the ever present possibility of redemption.

The ideas of 1789 are, strange as it may seem, excellent illustrations of just such christian truths run wild, or perhaps we had better say of christian ideas in corruption. The philosophy of modern revolution has, as Maritain points out, been singularly barren of any creative ideas of its own ; it has collected the crumbs fallen from the christian table in order to provide the leaven for the poisoned bread with which it has fed the masses ; it has had to borrow everything from its old enemy christianity. From this point of view the modern theory of revolution appears partly as a parody and partly as a corruption of christianity. The christian doctrine of the brotherhood of man is removed from its religious context as a preliminary to translating it into politics and economics. Similarly, the christian doctrine of human destiny and freedom disappears from view only to reappear in the pagan dress of absolute human self-sufficiency and liberty, while the doctrine of the equality of men before God is transported from the supernatural plane where alone it possesses full significance to the purely human plane.

Like fraternity the conception of equality is at bottom a religious conception. One cannot exist without the other, and neither can exist without relation to a superhuman principle. We

have already stated the reasons why this is true of fraternity. Why it is equally true of equality is worth considering. What is the sanction of the claim to equality which is almost universally recognised? In other words, is there any fundamental principle which demands that men should be treated as equals, that even though a hierarchy of offices and functions is inseparable from the organisation of the society, nevertheless men have an equal claim to freedom, to justice, and to opportunities of a good and happy life? The natural and physical order cannot be invoked to justify the claim to equality. On the contrary, the analogy of natural and physical conditions tells entirely in favour of inequality. It is quite clear that men can never be in all or even in most respects equal. They are not and cannot be equally strong, healthy, intelligent or useful. Yet despite these facts of universal and everyday experience the political philosopher who recommends inequality for its own sake is the exception, and by common consent men persist in believing that they are entitled to equal opportunities of becoming as free, virtuous, intelligent, healthy and happy as it is humanly possible to be. Why this conviction which nature brutally repudiates? What is its sanction if it has no sanction in matter, nor in reason which can be used to deny its validity? We speak of the claim to equality as right and just, and so whether we are materialists or christians, in the last resort we appeal to morality to justify the notion of human equality. Moreover, since it is impossible, as we have seen, to verify our belief in equality in purely human terms—men and women differing so obviously in their natural faculties—the morality in which the notion of equality is rooted must be an objective and superhuman one. In short, so far as there is any ground for believing in human equality christianity is responsible for it. There is no place for it in the materialistic conception of life. Considered from a strictly human point of view, it is a matter of utility or convenience which we choose: fraternity or hatred, equality or inequality, freedom or slavery.

On the subject of the relationship of democracy and christianity I may perhaps call as my last witnesses the English historian, Arnold Toynbee, and the French philosopher, Henri Bergson. For both democracy in its pure state is a christian derivative. "The ideal of our modern Western Democracy," writes Toynbee, in *A Study of History*, "has been to apply in practical politics the christian intuition

of the fraternity of all mankind." If it has turned out badly it is because it has entered into alliance with the diametrically opposed spirit of modern paganism and materialism. Bergson is of the same opinion. According to him "Democracy is in essence evangelical; its motive force is love." It is significant that Trotsky, who is undoubtedly the most consistent if not indeed the last of the pure Marxists, confirms this view from the opposite angle. If he condemns pure democracy, it is because he believes it to be fundamentally nothing else than "a paraphrase of the christian religion, a secularised version of christian mysticism." Certainly in this as in so many other matters Trotsky exhibits his ability for hitting the nail on the head. A similar hostility to democracy and for the same reasons finds frequent expression in the writings of Lenin. And scientific socialists have always felt much the same way although most of them are too prudent to express their hostility so openly. The catchwords of democracy are too useful to be dispensed with as yet. Spokesmen of the so-called scientific school, such as the Webbs, have, however, from time to time frankly admitted that their principal objection to democracy is the danger that through it socialism may be contaminated by the non-scientific spirit of christianity.

From the point of view of the scientific socialist there is no room in socialism for religious values which, like cannibalism, they regard as now happily extinct. Socialism to be scientific must be atheist. The fact is, however, that socialism has not succeeded in rationalising itself and the so-called scientific element in it has contributed least to its success. Marx, the scientific socialist, would never have produced as much as a ripple on the surface had he not also been Marx the prophet. For, paradoxical as it may seem, it is only where socialism borrows from religion that it comes alive and moves the masses. Would Marx be remembered to-day as other than an obscure pedant who, a century or so ago, excogitated such curiosities as the theory of surplus value, were it not that his economics take fire from the passion for righteousness which was a part of his Jewish inheritance? What would communism have been without its appeal to justice, its claim to champion the poor and the oppressed, its belief in revolution as opening the way to the millenium, its wholesale piracy of christianity—christianity spelt backwards? All the contradictions which we noted in democracy are multiplied a hundred fold in revolutionary socialism. Pure paganism or pure materialism is not without the possibility of

possessing stability on a low level. The inherent instability of revolutionary socialism arises precisely from the fact that it is unable to come to terms with or escape from christianity. In other words, it is betrayed by potentialities which might have made for good instead of evil. If instead of Marx there had arisen in the first half of the 19th century a revolutionary leader capable of transcending British utilitarianism and French utopianism, there can be little doubt that history would have taken a different and far more creative direction. The misfortune was not that Marx was a revolutionary but that he was so utterly the product of the very forces against which he was in revolt. If he went beyond Malthus and Bentham, it was by Jewish temperament, not by the texture of his ideas.

"By their fruits you shall know them." From the French revolution liberal democracy continued to grow apace. It spread its branches over an area coextensive with our westernised civilization. There seemed no reason to doubt that its fruit was wholesome. The first signs of poisoning showed themselves in the Great War. The possibility that the poison was not deadly and might be due to some other cause has had to be abandoned in the face of the events of the post-war period. Not since the Dark Ages has mankind been so deeply divided, European solidarity so weakened, nations so set against one another, the foundations of individual and political life so disintegrated or so sterilized, religion so implacably persecuted. Aggressive militarism, brutal materialism, sheer imbecility in its endless permutations and combinations dominate the minds of men and so threaten to dominate for a time the course of history. There must indeed be something radically rotten with the tree on which such evil fruit has grown.

II.

LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

CONSIDERED in its most general terms, individualistic liberalism is the philosophy which lay at the root of capitalism and parliamentary democracy during the 19th century. It was a synthetic philosophy. Just as two elements in the chemical sense unite to form something that has a character all its own, so the fusion of many tendencies brought forth in individualistic liberalism a new way of regarding mankind. Among the tendencies which, from every point of the historical compass, had long been converging towards liberalism may be mentioned : the individualistic religious tradition of Protestantism ; the metaphysical individualism of thinkers like Kant in Germany, Diderot in France and Hume in England ; the romantic and utopian individualism of poets like Shelley and prophets like Rousseau ; the economic individualism of French physiocrats like Turgot and of English utilitarians like Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham ; and above all the political individualism which finds expression in the American Declaration of Rights of 1776 and in its French counterpart, the Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789. In fact, individualism was the point at which the dominant tendencies of the second half of the 18th century intersected, and by the middle of the 19th century it had become the circumference as well as the centre of the whole realm of thought which lay outside the Catholic tradition.

There were, however, areas where Catholicism and liberalism overlapped. Through Protestantism individualistic liberalism was linked to the earlier Catholic tradition. For Protestantism had its roots in Catholic soil. Hence amid many errors persisted not a few grains of truth. Liberalism, as it emerged from the French revolution, emphasised the existence of intrinsic human rights. It widened the circle of political justice and extended the notion of equality to include at least equality before the law. However evil an influence

Rousseau may have exercised in the long run, his work in some of its aspects does reflect a genuine spirit of humanism in the Catholic sense of the word, as does likewise the revolutionary declaration of the rights of man which was inspired by a belief in the possession by the individual of certain primary rights which neither the state nor any external authority was entitled to take away from him. The Catholic doctrine of natural law passed from Catholicism via Protestantism into liberalism although, it is true, in the passage it was distorted almost out of all recognition to its original self. It becomes in the end a shadowy caricature of the great christian tradition and teaching on the subject of human personality. The new emphasis on natural right almost to the exclusion of the primary conception of natural law could not but compromise any conception of right at all. The new picture of man made of him a sort of Robinson Crusoe.

To the present day in its concern for the dignity and rights of the individual, liberalism continues to use the language of natural rights, but the language in which it speaks is not the classic language in which the doctrine of natural rights has been developed and expounded from the Stoics to St. Thomas Aquinas and from St. Thomas to Cardinal Bellarmine. That doctrine was transmitted to the 19th century not in its original purity but in a corrupt version which derived on the one side from the English philosopher Locke and his next of kin among the philosophers of the French Enlightenment and on the other from the rationalistic and pietistic individualism of the Protestant theologians of the 17th and 18th century. The saving grace of the Catholic conception of personality was not, however, wholly lost, and the first half of the nineteenth century saw a Catholic school of liberal thought which included such great names as de Tocqueville, Lamennais, and Lacordaire.

At the opposite pole to true humanism is the individualism which thus came not to fulfil but to destroy personality, and which was, in its origin, a part of the fatal legacy of what was most pagan in the Renaissance and least Catholic in the Reformation. This individualism which was to prove a main factor in the disintegration of the organic Catholic civilization of the West has had historically a double root, one in pagan naturalism, the other in individualistic Protestantism. Its outcome was a new cult of man as demi-God.

The consequence of the new subjective attitude towards man, a consequence which Luther, least of all, can have anticipated, and

which he would have repudiated with horror, was to be that men would eventually set up the worship of the individual, of the ego, of organised human power. From the individualism of the 16th century to the megalomania of the 19th century was a startling but logical transition. So far as it is possible to gather together the leading ideas of the 19th century and resolve them into a single key principle, that principle might be stated thus. If man is not actually a God he is potentially one. He is a God in the making. The idea, like most others, was not new, and goes back to pagan antiquity. When Greek philosophers thought of man as partaking of the principle of divinity they thereby halved the distance which separated man from God. What was new was the repudiation of any divinity which transcended man. For the first time in the history of the human race men were content to live in a world without doors or windows. For, as Ruskin pointed out, even for man in the savage state, there are windows which open on infinite and unseen worlds.

For present purposes we may regard the 19th century idolatry of man as having originated in the Renaissance and Reformation. Alongside of, and in opposition to, the tradition of Catholic humanism so superbly exemplified in the life and genius of Michael Angelo and of St. Thomas More, there thus arose a neo-paganism which exalted the individual man at the expense of God, Church and society. A new way of looking at the world had come to birth.

By a remarkable irony, Lutheranism, which looked at man in a spirit of pessimism and judged him to be essentially and incurably corrupt, nevertheless contributed enormously to the eventual triumph of pagan individualism. Things often turn out very differently from what their authors expected. What was eventually to prevail as Protestantism's cardinal principle was not Luther's view that man was essentially bad (which exaggerated the Catholic doctrine of original sin), much less his discovery that man could never be anything else than bad, that nothing can come from human nature except evil which was the precise point at which he went beyond Catholicism and fell into heresy. What prevailed was the principle of the supremacy of private judgement which, in Luther's case, was merely a product of his radical pessimism about human nature. The next step was taken when the only final authority was declared to be the conscience of each individual interpreting his Bible. Private judgement, free inquiry, free thought followed logically on one another,

so that by the same right as Luther had repudiated external authority, the individual Protestant might some day exercise his individual discretion and find after all that human nature was not as black as it was painted.

This is precisely what happened. From opposite directions the two lines of thought approached one another until at last they combined in the myth of natural goodness, which, together with the myth of continuous progress, provides the basis of the modern idolatry of man so characteristically exemplified in the writings of that perfect specimen of the progressist, Mr. H. G. Wells. The time and place at which they met was in the second half of the 18th century and in the writings of Rousseau. Particularly significant, in this context, are his *Social Contract*, his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality among Men* and his *Pastor of Savoy*. It is as a Protestant that Rousseau turns the tables on Protestant dogma. For the basis of that dogma is the freedom of the individual conscience which quite logically Rousseau regarded as justifying the exercise of free judgement or enquiry. Now the result of the *free enquiry* which he conducted into his own nature and that of his fellow men was to convince him that the whole of Protestant dogma, and especially the Lutheran conception of original sin as completely incurable, was false, and what was worse must poison any society of men in which it was generally held. Having looked into his own heart, Rousseau came to the conclusion that human nature is essentially good and self-sufficient. The corollary was that man had no need of supernatural grace, and from this to the rejection of supernatural religion in favour of the religion of humanity was an inevitable step. It was the highest compliment he could have paid his fellow men, though Voltaire rejected the compliment with derision in the person of *Candide*, who, it may be recalled, had some difficulty in reconciling his naive faith that all must be for the best in the best of all possible worlds with the disagreeable realities of life. But the Voltairian note of dissent was drowned in the chorus of mutual congratulations which showed no signs of diminishing until the bloody events of the French revolution came to suggest, that, if man was not as black as Luther had painted him, neither was he as virtuous as Rousseau supposed.

In the myth of the natural goodness and perfectibility of man which for the modern world replaces the belief in Divine Grace, Rousseau released an idea which nothing could kill. It survived

the reign of terror, the wars of Napoleon, the disillusionment of the restoration—somewhat worse for the wear to be sure. But no sooner had the last echoes of the guns died away than it started again on its career with results which could not have been anticipated by any 18th century thinker. For the modern notion of continuous progress with which it combined was a 19th century product.

It was the discovery that the physical universe in which man was included had evolved from primordial chaos to its present highly organised state which led to the belief that human life was capable of indefinite development and improvement by purely natural means, that although the rate of human progress might slow down it could never come to a standstill but all the time was proceeding inevitably, so that it was an illusion to regard even the human species as fixed. Just as man had evolved from the beast, so from man would evolve the superman. There was no end to the possibilities which the future held in store. The new revelation was already foreshadowed in the speculations of Hegel which placed God not at the beginning but at the end of the cosmic process. There was nothing in the evidence for evolutionary change to necessitate the theory of necessary progress. The facts, such as they are, can be fitted to various and opposing cosmologies. They have been interpreted as no less appropriate, for example, to the Greek view of the universe repeating itself in an eternal cycle than to the modern view, according to which the universe may be said to resemble a clock, which, having started fully wound up, is now irreversibly running down. It was the combination of philosophies which, like Hegelianism, saw the universe as God in the making with the evolutionary theory that created the myth of continuous and necessary progress. The average man in industrial countries took to the new philosophy like a duck to water. Had it not been triumphantly demonstrated by the progress in the applied sciences which had led to a phenomenal development of mechanical power? The point is put very clearly by Wyndham Lewis: "The obsession of a mechanical *betterment*, proceeding without ceasing, is natural to industrial man; the 'progress' of the engineer, the rapid changes and improvements of the technique of industry, make it natural for him to regard everything in terms of change and improvement, and to think that he can apply to himself or to other men the methods proper to machinery."

Rousseau had no inkling of the revolution in thought and in

technique that was at hand. The world as he saw it was static, and for him, as for most of his revolutionary contemporaries, the problem was not so much to change the world as to restore it to its natural state. Yet, as Maritain has remarked, since Rousseau's earthly paradise did not actually exist in the present, and yet should by right of nature exist, it must of necessity be the great task of the future to bring us to possess it. Thus by an extraordinary inversion the earthly paradise which Rousseau had supposed to exist at the beginning of human history is set as a goal on the horizon, so that man's right to happiness constituted a perpetual appeal from the present to the future.

For Rousseau progress meant personal and social progress. It was essentially a moral value. That man would be actually transformed and become a different although superior being was a possibility which few can have contemplated until well on in the 19th century. Rousseau was content to canonise man and to leave him alone in that blissful state. On the other hand, the doctrine of automatic progress developed under the influence of the natural sciences cut both ways. It proposed to take away the dignity and rights of man in the present in order to return them multiplied to the *n*th power in the future. The greatness of his future state was in proportion to the insignificance of his present one. In the Greek myth, Daedalus, the cunning craftsman, fastens wings to the shoulders of his son, Icarus, but when Icarus draws nigh to the sun, the wax, with which the wings are fastened, melts, and he falls to his death. The modern Icarus fares no better. How the notion of natural goodness and the notion of automatic progress merge in each other; and how they have conspired to produce a sort of mystical cult of the man in the future as a result of which the man in the present has been thrown down from his pedestal, is a sequel which properly belongs to the twentieth century.

This long excursion into the present has been justified, I hope, by the light it throws upon the other questions belonging to the main line of our argument, which takes us back to the conception of liberty created by pre-evolutionary utopians. Let us, to begin with, consider the consequences which logically follow from the belief that man is innately good and will never go wrong so long as he is guided by his natural instincts and impulses. If this were true, we would be bound to conclude in the first place that absolute liberty is the ideal

state for each individual, and in the second place if the individual falls into error or does evil it is not through any fault of his own but because he has been diverted from his natural bent by pressure from without. In this view, anything which lessens the freedom of the individual is evil, and the most deadly manifestation of the evil which strikes at the root of freedom is to be found in the state, the church, and generally speaking in the whole structure of civilization which, since it is founded on compulsion, is the opposite of liberty. That remarkable contemporary of Rousseau, the anarchist Fourier, sums up the whole matter in his famous watchword *Civilization is the Enemy*.

At the risk of wearying the reader, I must repeat the train of thought which underlies anarchism. For anarchism reveals the goal to which the philosophy of individualism leads if acted upon with absolute logic. It is at once the purest product of individualism and the most perfect revelation of the suicidal contradiction which lies at the root of the philosophy of individualism. Nowhere have the pre-suppositions of absolute individualism been stated with such lucidity as in Rousseau's writings, especially in his *Social Contract*, the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, and in his defence of *Émile* against the criticism of M. De Beaumont, the Archbishop of Paris. In the ideal condition in which man originally existed he was perfect and solitary. His perfection implies his isolation or independence. He is born good even in the state of civilization which represents the passage from equality to inequality, from virtue to vice, and from freedom to tyranny ; it is civilization which depraves him ; he ought to be left to his natural instincts which are always right. The various social institutions, family, property, the state, only help to corrupt him in as much as they are instruments of coercion, moral or physical, which destroy his natural and free development. Therefore let them be abolished. In consequence no property, no state, no marriage. Instead, free union, mutual aid ; society is to be an association of free producers. There will be no occasion for compulsion, no dominion of one over another, " the free development of each will lead to the free development of all "—thus Karl Marx joins with Rousseau in proclaiming the golden age.

What is the ultimate source of this faith in the efficacy of absolute individual freedom which is the common ground underlying the theories of anarchism, liberalism, and Marxian socialism, the point

at which they all meet or to be more precise the point from which they all start? Its ultimate source is to be found in the denial of original sin or, to use non-theological language, in the refusal to recognise the problem of evil. That ancient phantom had, it was assumed, been dispelled. Were not men naturally good and by natural means perfectible? Strictly speaking, there is no room in the anarchist, liberal, or Marxist philosophy for the notion of evil or sin. But the thinker with a political axe to grind usually regards intellectual consistency as a secondary consideration. His first consideration is political action, and for the purpose of influencing men's minds in the direction he wants one idea is as good as another. Indeed falsehood may at times seem more serviceable than the truth. All the same, one cannot help wondering at the ease with which thinkers in the utopian tradition turn a blind eye to the all important consideration that by virtue of the primary postulate of natural goodness evil is banished from the human world and obviously ceases to have any relevance to earthquakes or volcanic eruptions when such natural catastrophes are considered apart from men. In effect, the procedure of utopians of all schools is to transfer the burden of guilt from humanity to its institutions, or from one category of humanity to another. For anarchists, civilization is the original sin; for Marxists, it is identified with the bourgeoisie; while for liberals it would appear to consist in any fall from free thought, that is to say, in any lapse into intellectual or religious certainty.

Liberalism represents an uneasy compromise between civilization and anarchism. For it is of the essence of anarchism, as of Marxian communism, that it is an ideal which is not merely unrealisable but actually impossible, having no point of contact with man's actual position, or with any position which he has ever occupied in human history. It separates the individual from the life and activity of his environment; it points to each of his fellows as a possible check on his liberty and a possible limitation of his well being—therefore, a potential enemy. It starts from an abstraction which is completely sterile because there is no means of descending from it into reality. It suggests nothing positive to replace the institutions which it proposes to destroy. Anarchism, therefore, resolves itself, in the last analysis, into the negation of the social idea.

From the metaphysical, moral, humanitarian, aesthetic and sentimental presuppositions common to anarchism and liberalism was

conjured up the mirage world of the 19th century optimists. The mirage was as alluring as the reality which it concealed from the eyes of men was ominous and forbidding, for behind the mirage was a desert of boundless egotism, self-deception, emptiness of soul, and approaching despair.

Now anarchism is the soul of liberalism, having at length found itself a body, for anarchism in its pure state is, as we have seen, quite incapable of any social embodiment.

Looked at from our vantage point in the 20th century even such exponents of moderate liberalism as de Tocqueville or John Stuart Mill appear to have been strangely blind to the direction in which ideas and events were tending. Apparently, they thought they had in the principle of liberty the philosopher's stone which automatically would transform the base metal of despotism into the pure gold of freedom. They saw much further, it is true, than most liberal doctrinaires, in as much as at least they were aware that the pursuit of individual freedom for its own sake and not for the sake of the intellectual and moral values whose function it is to subserve was like putting the car before the horse. They might, therefore, have been expected to attend to the important consequences which followed from the proposition that liberty is a means to an end and not an end in itself. But the tide was too strong for them and so they too drifted, disregarding or at least failing to appreciate the extent to which that harmonious balance of beliefs and activities which we term civilization is a legacy from the past, how little a generation adds to the common stock, how easy it is to destroy what it may have taken centuries of patient effort and genius to build up, how rapid can be the reversion to barbarism when the spiritual and social bonds which hold men together in society have been loosened. For, in fact, civilization is not a permanent conquest; its high lights are few and far between; ancestral savagery lays perpetual siege to its domain, and the price of its preservation is perpetual vigilance and self-renewal.

If it is true, as most competent biologists hold, that the qualities acquired by an organism in the course of its life are not transmitted to its descendants, is there any reason why the reverse should be the case in regard to human societies, why we should conclude that intellectual and moral acquisitions are transmitted by heredity from one generation of human beings to another? It is not possible to take

seriously the bogus biology at present fashionable in Germany according to which civilization is something which inheres in blood or race. Civilization inheres in the body politic and is preserved and developed in the aggregate of institutions, laws, education, customs and traditions which is the heritage of each human being newly come into the world and which form his habits and outlook as he grows up.

From this we may perceive the senselessness of the neutral or liberal conception of the state, neutral in the sense that it is by definition indifferent to moral and intellectual values, and takes as its unique end the liberty of each individual to follow his own inclinations and live as he wishes so long as he does not interfere with the liberty of his neighbour. Such a state, in so far as it can be brought into existence at all, must necessarily exist largely as a parasite, for to keep itself alive it must fall back upon the intellectual and moral resources available in civilization as already constituted and use them up like a spendthrift; it is debarred by its own first principle of neutrality from regarding the accumulation of fresh moral and intellectual values as in any way comparable in importance with the cultivation of a free, critical and agnostic attitude towards all inherited values. We have already argued that freedom in itself is not a positive value, that its importance lies in its power to extend the range and multiply the possibilities of creative thought and activity, but only on condition that it is kept in its place which is that of servant and not master. The great error common to all schools of liberalism was to imagine that liberty could be given a blank cheque on civilization.

The average liberal may at this point offer an objection on somewhat the following lines. He may say: But what you have described as liberalism is a caricature of what it really is. Instead of working down from abstract principles, work up from the political plane where it is really at home, and it will be seen in its true light. Decisions are necessary for social action; for determining policy, making laws, founding institutions. These decisions, we liberals maintain, should be taken only after, by means of free thought, free speech and free press, the arguments for and against have been fully canvassed, after all relevant considerations have been considered, and after the people have been enabled in this way to agree on what it is best to do. Therefore, liberal regimes consider it necessary to guarantee free thought and the free expression of all views on all questions—even of mutually incompatible views. From this it does not follow that the

liberal state subscribes to logical contradictions, and so accepts the relativity of truth, or because moral standards are allowed to be called in question, that it accepts the relativity of morals. In some cases the state does not know which of the alternative propositions put forward in the course of public discussion is true. Then it leaves the decision to free discussion. But we are prepared to go further and say that, in the last analysis, all questions may safely be left to the decision of free discussion which has the double advantage of discovering the truth and popularising it. "Du choc des opinions jaillit la vérité."

This is the sort of defence of liberalism that, I suppose, might be put up by the average liberal. My reply to his arguments would be as follows. I am, of course, quite prepared to recognise the value of free discussion. One may recognise that not only is it valuable but up to a point necessary, even while one cannot agree that it is either as possible or as infallible a means of arriving at the truth in political or social matters as the liberal supposes. First, it is not as free as he supposes in the sense that all public discussion is influenced by motives of self-interest, ambition, and all the passions and prejudices which, as often as not, operate rather to deceive than to enlighten. We will not delay to discuss these points which will be discussed fully when we come to deal with parliamentary democracy. The really fundamental objection to be urged against free thought, which is the pivotal principle on which the liberal conception of free discussion turns, is its inherently self-destructive character.

Liberalism is really a by-product of the general revolt against the intelligence which has grown to enormous dimensions since Luther called for the death of that "beast." As men lost faith in the intelligence, they looked around for a substitute, and the first substitute they found was the individualism which in the 19th century developed into the worship of freedom as an absolute unconditional value which ranks above all other values. That liberalism was a part of the general conspiracy to dethrone the ancient hierarchy of truth, beauty and goodness which had exercised their serene dominion over the human mind since ancient Greece, is evident at all stages of its history. Taken on its political side, it consists in a compromise between ideas or courses of action which presupposes that no absolute truth exists, that there is no objective or valid standard by which truth may be known, that truth is relative, which is only another

way of saying that there are no truths but merely conventions or utilities to be put on or set aside as the mental climate varies. At first sight the advocacy of free thought seems to secure the pre-eminence of intellect.

Actually, the formula free thought when carefully examined proves to be the strongest brand of anti-intellectualism that it is possible to imagine. The adjective *free* makes all the difference in the world to the noun *thought*. For the notion of free thought is fundamentally as self-contradictory as the notion of continuous necessary progress. At bottom they are different forms of the modern cult of change, motion, action, call it what you will, but which, whatever form it takes, cancels all permanent values. The only permanent thing about a world of incessant movement or flux is, so to speak, its impermanence. In the notions of free thought and necessary progress we have two particularly fine specimens of what Maritain has called the pseudo-idea, "the idea which is at once 'clear' for the imagination, and fundamentally absurd in itself." Is it necessary to add that thought has its laws and the absence of law and logic which complete freedom involves would mean thought reduced to anarchy, the killing of the intellect which has indeed been the principal occupation of freethinkers during the past century? This is far from being a sweeping statement. It is no exaggeration to say that the "mind"—that symbol of everything that was divine in man for the Greeks—is now the enemy to be hunted down and destroyed. The parallel manifestations in the fields of science and philosophy and literature and politics, of cults of the unconscious, of instinct, of blood, of the mass man, which in a thousand hybrid and misshapen forms swarm all over the contemporary landscape, is the outstanding fact which distinguishes our epoch from all preceding ones. Paradoxical as it may seem in view of the enormous progress of the applied sciences, our age is unique in its appetite for irrationalities and its fanatical hatred of intellect. Even such an acute thinker as Bertrand Russell has latterly succumbed to the temptation to join in the hue and cry. His methods may be more subtle and delicate than the ordinary, but the result is the same. He, too, forces reason to the point at which it has, apparently, no choice but to disown itself, and so a self-confessed imposter to hide its face in shame.

Emancipation from the tyranny of the intellect, emancipation from the tyranny of ethics, one was as necessary as the other, and both

were accomplished with a thoroughness which the intelligentsia itself is beginning to find out has had its drawbacks. For modern intellectual activity is mostly transacted in the glare of the footlights; the audience mixes with the actors, roams freely behind the scenes, and feels quite at home among the stage properties. The result has been the assimilation by the masses for the first time in history of bits and scraps of the horrible mess made by abstractions and generalizations as they poured down into countless popularizations—*science for the millions, philosophy for the millions, social science for the millions*—and all the other hybrid, grotesque, and semi-literate forms in which abstract thought re-produced itself upon the mundane plane of popularisation and fashion. And most of this ill-digested thought is destructive which is perhaps the most serious aspect of the matter. We are in a better position than people were a generation ago to estimate the amount of destructive thought that can be absorbed by the ordinary man without destructive effects. It is, as we know, very limited. The principle to have no principles, the belief that belief is nonsensical, the conviction that truth (if such exists) is inaccessible to the human mind, the widely prevalent view that indeed no absolute truth exists, that, in fact, truth is what works, and that therefore what is true to-day may be false to-morrow. These are the essential propositions behind contemporary liberalism. These negations were born of the original negation of free thought which itself presupposed the absence of any fixed principle within or without the universe, and they in turn have given birth to a whole host of new negations. How could liberalism despite the elements of truth and strength which it inherited from the christian past prove otherwise than destructive in its effect when it bore within itself this powerful appetite for negation. Its action at the heart of civilization might be compared to the action of a circular saw installed in the inside of a tree. It requires an empty space to begin with, and as it works the space widens. The void created by liberalism in a civilization which seen from the outside still looked quite healthy might perhaps more appropriately be described as a vacuum. For a vacuum is not particular as to how it is filled provided it is filled, as witness, in this connection, the revival of primitive tribalism and primitive Asiatic despotism in their respective Russian and German disguises. From Luther to Rousseau and from Marx to Stalin and Hitler, the road is without a break, and at the end of the road

absolute individualism found its grave. In point of historical fact the grave diggers were already at work when individualistic liberalism was still at the height of its power and prestige. It is sufficient to mention the names of Marx, Nietzsche and Darwin to show that individualism had, by the middle of the nineteenth century, begun to pass over into the collectivist mechanism which is at once the product of individualism and its nemesis.

This was inevitable. The essence of the case I have been making in my hostile analysis of individualistic liberalism is that beyond a certain point the development of individualism involves the destruction of individuality.

After this somewhat lengthy but necessary excursion into the domain of liberal philosophy we will return to consider the practical outcome of liberalism in economics and in politics. What perhaps has most interest for us here is that the liberal state applied in the sphere of economics the full logic of the anarchism which it rejected in the sphere of politics. The business of the state was to maintain law and order and to interfere as little as possible with the free play of individual ideas and activities.

In this view religion, politics and economics were each separate and watertight compartments. Freedom was at its maximum in the first, which was regarded as a strictly private preserve, and at its minimum in the second, for there freedom had perforce to come to terms with law, and *all* law and not merely public law is a restriction of freedom. The third, economics, was regarded as *par excellence* the sphere of *free practical* activity. Not that the average liberal held that the economic process should be allowed to develop independently of moral considerations. On the contrary. From his point of view it was axiomatic that unrestricted competition, free trade, the maximum freedom of private initiative and enterprise, were of all methods the ones best calculated to bring about the triumph of justice as well as efficiency in economic matters. Man was altogether good, and therefore in the long run nothing but good could come of the free exercise of his capacities. This libertarian optimism, which enabled the utilitarians to hold that private interest or, in other words, selfishness is the chief incentive to progress, was the root of the false separation made by the liberal state between politics and economics, and in consequence the cause of its failure to cope with the economic

factor, which has such a large part in determining the actual conditions of life in any human society. The decline of the liberal state on the Continent has, of course, been in large measure due to its failure in this respect.

Mixed up in an odd way with the new belief in perfectibility and progress was the older Calvinistic belief that the good are always the successful. It may sound strange to our ears. But anyone who cares to consult the fiction which formed the favourite reading of the English middle class a hundred years ago will find there abundant evidence of the popular identification of righteousness and success. Some of the most popular of the second rate fiction written about the middle of the 19th century makes nauseating reading to-day on account of its admixture of gross materialism and sanctimonious righteousness, but it is none the less informative in the sidelight it sheds on the attitude of a section of the English middle class towards the new harsh industrial capitalism which in a few generations transformed English life. To understand the deep disgust felt by the American philosopher, William James, for what he calls "the bitch goddess, Success," we must bear in mind that after the American Civil War the same raw atmosphere of righteousness and ruthlessness gradually spread over the whole of the United States. Long after it had begun to disappear from England the American air was dense with it. In fact, the unpleasant American idolatry of success held its own as a kind of national religion till the bottom fell out of it with the Wall Street crash and the subsequent depression.

There is, of course, nothing more inconsistent with christianity, nothing more profoundly materialistic, than the optimistic liberal idea that in a free competition the most intelligent and most virtuous will always come to the top, that economic success is a result granted to a man as a reward for his virtues. In the end it was not christianity but Darwinism that led to the abandonment of the idea that success is a sign of sanctification. For the Darwinian doctrine of the struggle for existence not only disposed of the notion that the good are always the successful but provided instead the new and far more potent idea of the survival of the fittest. Under the sign of evolution liberalism was reborn. At first sight it seems somewhat of a mystery that liberalism should have so unceremoniously deserted Rousseau for Darwin. That the main body of liberals did so is

beyond any manner of doubt. It would be impossible to imagine anything more unlike, or indeed more fatal to, Rousseau's picture of a happy human procession wending its way peacefully towards the promised land of a second golden age than Darwin's law of animal survival by ruthless struggle, and the accompanying picture of the organic shambles through which men had reached their present state of civilization and by means of which they would continue to ascend to the undreamt of heights that lay ahead in the future. As to the motives underlying the sudden change of allegiance, we may conjecture that apart from any acceptance of Darwinism as true in itself the following must have counted for much—otherwise the ecstasies of enthusiasm and rejoicing aroused by the new revelation remain incomprehensible. First liberalism had outgrown its honeymoon faith in natural goodness; the slums, sweating, child labour and other such accompaniments of the ruthless process of economic individualism made it impossible for all but a favoured few to continue to see life through the old rose tinted glasses. Darwin's theory of the struggle for existence, on the other hand, left ample room for evil, but took the sting out of it by making it a principle of progress, and progress was what really mattered. Secondly, Darwinism was supposed to have expelled from the universe at one stroke and at the same time the last vestige of deity and the last shadow of objective morality. These last achievements were what assured its immediate and widespread popularity in liberal and socialist quarters.

All the same, contrary to what might have been expected, the sight of the Darwinian shambles did not have the effect of completely paralysing and silencing "the bird on the bough of Rousseau's fancy." He has continued to sing, at increasingly rare intervals, it is true, the song composed for him in the first flush of liberal optimism, apparently regardless of the catastrophe by which his paradise has been transformed into a jungle. So that although for some liberals the economic struggle works itself out in terms of the survival of the fittest, for others it continues to represent the triumph of the most virtuous, and more commonly still these two notions are to be found side by side or blended in the doctrine of justification by success. Stated otherwise, there is, according to this view, no obligation except self-interest; that is to say, no obligation at all. Progress is the final criterion of the activities of individuals and of states; and since all that succeeds must in one way or other further progress, all

that succeeds must be good, which in the end comes to the same thing as the doctrine that might is right.

Here again I may be met with the objection that the preceding analysis of post-Darwinian liberalism presents only half the picture, leaving out completely the other and brighter half. Historical generalizations are particularly vulnerable to this type of criticism, for precisely because a historical generalization abstracts from the complex totality of the events and attitudes and thoughts of a given phase or period of history it is only true up to a point. All that can be claimed for any historical judgement is that it takes into account the dominant and determining factors of the situation, interprets them honestly, and so arrives at a more or less close approximation to the truth. Undoubtedly it would be an over-simplification to ignore the fact that the central stream of liberalism which turned into Darwinian channels contained and carried along with it a powerful undercurrent of political and social idealism derived from the pre-evolutionary movement for the assertion of personal and parliamentary liberties. My concern, however, has not been with this movement, which really has its roots in christian tradition, but with that doctrinaire movement, individualistic in its origin and secular and revolutionary in its development, to which the term liberalism came to be generally applied during the second half of the 19th century. Till then, of course, the term "liberalism" is often applied in its narrower sense to describe the constitutional opposition to absolutist governments.

Again, it would be an over-simplification to treat economic liberalism, by which, of course, we mean the whole modern development of individualistic capitalism, as though it existed in a pure state and within definite time limits. Generally speaking it reached its peak point about the middle of the last century, especially in industrial England, when the maximum neutrality of the state coincided with the maximum freedom of capitalistic enterprise, and conspired one with the other to bring about the new type of industrial society. But once again liberalism was obliged to compromise with its own principles. Within less than a generation it had begun to abandon in practice its cherished principle of neutrality and had commenced to intervene in the economic process in order to remove or forestall the most glaring evils which were resulting from the phenomenally rapid growth of industrial capitalism. From that time to this there has been a steadily increasing volume of social legislation, directed

for the common good and for the protection of the worker, in the light of which it is quite evident that the liberal state has long since abandoned its neutrality in economic matters and has, in fact, been progressively liquidating itself in favour of a state regulated system of economics. For all practical purposes, the Great War marked the final stage in the liquidation of the neutral type of state in Europe. The usual time lag has occurred in America where the opponents of President Roosevelt's programme of state intervention are fighting a losing battle on behalf of the once sacred liberal principle of economic individualism.

The question arises whether the liberal state is not now really converting itself into a totalitarian state, whether it has not repented too late of its inaction in economic matters, whether, in short, in industrial communities the survival of the liberal type of state is a likely prospect. Certainly, its prospects of survival are far from bright, for it can no longer afford to follow a policy of drift or half measures, while, if it attempts to take control of the economic process, it automatically converts itself into a socialist or totalitarian state. All the signs are that the liberal repentance is a death bed one. It came too late. All during the 19th century the liberal state behaved in much the same way as a householder who would only let in the plumber when the main pipe burst. It intervened in economics, so to speak, always against its principles, and no more than was absolutely unavoidable, but in the meantime irreparable harm had been done.

In consequence of the free play of unrestricted competition, acquisitive instincts, and the new and unprecedented development of money power the position of the mass of men in industrial communities had been radically altered, and the alteration was steadily in the direction of slavery. For the characteristic feature of the industrial society which has grown up under the shadow of the liberal state is that the majority of men, though politically equal to their employers and free to exercise all the functions of citizens, have for all practical purposes lost their economic freedom. All the time that political freedom was increasing, economic freedom was diminishing—that is one of the most striking paradoxes of modern history. The visible evidence of this is the existence in most modern communities of a proletariat, that is, of men possessing political freedom but dispossessed of economic freedom, and all the more conscious of the servitude to which they have been reduced because of the glaring contrast between

their position as free and equal citizens and their position as wage earners more or less in subjection to those who have property, whether the possessor of it be another individual or the state. For property is the necessary condition of economic freedom in any real sense of that term, so that compared with the farmer or craftsman of former times, the modern wage earner in a fully industrialised community, notwithstanding the higher degree of political freedom he possesses, is because of his economic servitude less free in all the essentials of life than his forefathers.

To accept at its face value the almost religious awe with which the average liberal or democratic politician does homage to the ballot box, the plebiscite, the constitution and all the other externals of political freedom would be never to suspect that that freedom could possibly have anything to do with such a mundane thing as economics, or that political freedom without economic freedom is worthless, much less to suspect that it is precisely because so many men have the one kind of freedom without the other that they are discontented with their lot, and that in some communities this discontent has grown to such proportions as to threaten the very structure of society. Freedom—the word is on the lips of every politician from one end of the world to the other and from morning to-night. Yet, in fact, freedom is the modern version of the unknown god. For if we except our own country and the few other countries fortunately favoured in this respect what do we find when we look around the world to-day? What justification is there for this insolent insistence on the superiority of our time in freedom and progress? Is it not painfully evident that since the Dark Ages there has seldom been a time about which we have as little right to boast as the present?

Let us consider more closely the vital relation economic freedom bears to the possibility of any freedom at all. It is not enough to say the worker has the "vote," and since workers are either in the majority or may attain a majority of votes, they are accordingly in a position to redress the balance of social injustice by pressure within parliament or directly as the government of the country. It is impossible, in this context, to deny the large element of truth in the communist contention that the arrival of universal suffrage has failed to bring about the realization of either genuine freedom or genuine equality, that the equal vote and formal legal equality are but the symbols of the equality which depends, in fact, upon the

conditions of daily existence. It is a matter of everyday experience that a man may be politically free in the sense that he enjoys equal political and legal rights with the millionaire or the head of the state ; he takes part in parliamentary elections to all outward appearances on the same footing as his employer, but it does not follow from this that he meets his employer on an equal footing in the most vital matter of all where he is concerned, namely, his way of livelihood. What, then, is the acknowledged formal liberty of citizens worth,¹ if in practice large numbers cannot obtain work or are in actual want or if necessity compels them to work under degrading conditions or for wages insufficient to support a man and his family? If a man has to put up with unfair conditions of work or is reduced to a mere automaton, bereft of all real initiative, or has to accept whatever his employer is prepared to pay him on pain of losing his job, and consequently his livelihood, though he may be called free because he has the vote and because he can leave his job at will, nevertheless in these conditions his liberty is at best very limited and at worst a mockery. Similarly, if a man has a legal right to his opinions and their expression but at the same time his employment and consequently his livelihood depends on employers who require of him other opinions and convictions, there again economic coercion is present as the determining factor, and so all the rights a man enjoys as a citizen may subtly or brutally as the case may be be taken away from him in his capacity as a worker.

It comes to this ; until there is reasonable security that the citizen cannot be forced by economic pressure into subservience to him who has property, whether the possessor of it be another individual or the state, he cannot be said to have achieved freedom in any real sense of the word. The Trade Unions, it is true, are there to protect the worker, but their power to do so is restricted within narrow limits so long as the resources of the all powerful modern state can be mobilised to maintain the economic status quo, whether it be capitalistic or socialistic. For all the means by which the citizen may be subjected to economic coercion and thus made to live at the will of another in a capitalistic regime are perpetuated in a far more intensified and pervasive form in a society where all private capitalists are eliminated in favour of one all-powerful capitalist master—the state.

¹ N. Berdyaev, *Christianity and Class War*, pp. 81-82.

The latter solution is the socialist one, for in the light of the Russian experiment there can be no longer any doubt that all socialism resolves itself in practice into state socialism.

The following conclusions appear, it seems to me, to emerge from the foregoing considerations. In the first place, unless freedom is grounded in economic justice it lacks any solid basis and is an entirely counterfeit thing as far as the majority of men are concerned. In the second place, economic justice is bound up with the possession and control of property. In other words, human freedom is bound up with personality or the sense of personal responsibility which is fully alive when a man's work is in the main his own creation and is wholly dormant when what he does is at the dictation of others. Whence it follows that in proportion as property is widely distributed and personal responsibility for work widely prevalent in a community, that community will tend to consist of freemen, and in proportion as they are absent it will tend to be a community of slaves. Thus the two democracies—the economic and the political—are the necessary and vital condition of any democracy worthy of freemen.

We have perhaps now proceeded far enough to draw the arguments of our critical survey of liberalism together and to state briefly our conclusions:

(1). The modern doctrine of liberalism, first formulated in utopian terms and later elaborated in terms of Darwinism, is in its essence, to put it as simply as possible, an anti-social, anti-intellectual and anti-personal doctrine. It stands at one removal from anarchism.

(2). Its role has been essentially critical, disintegrating and transitional. I say transitional because the liberal experiment, being in practice a compromise between a society decomposing into its constituent individual units and the organic type of society of pre-reformation Europe, could not be other than a half-way house, a kind of twilight state, as Christopher Dawson puts it, between the old christian world and the new secular mass type of civilization now coming into existence.

(3) The trend of liberalism both in philosophy, politics and in economics, has, in fact, been towards aristocracy, the modern form of which is plutocracy, rather than towards democracy in any accepted sense of the term.

(4). The most important practical outcome of liberalism has been

the modern growth of *laissez-faire* capitalism. This individualistic type of capitalism, it is true, took its rise in the Italian city-states prior to the Reformation, but liberalism fitted it like a glove, providing it with the impetus of a philosophy. For free capitalism appears in the 19th century simply as liberalism logically applied in the field of economics. The two things stand or fall together. That is why capitalism has, in many instances, already involved the liberal state in its own bankruptcy, and also the reason why liberalism is everywhere a declining power.

III.

PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

WHEN we speak of Parliamentary Democracy we mean the state system founded on universal suffrage and government by alternate political parties. The most notable exception to this rule is Switzerland, which manages to get on very well without the party system of government, but the Swiss method of all party government, although well worth studying and, perhaps, even adopting, is nevertheless sufficiently exceptional to be left over for later discussion. The first question we have to ask ourselves is whether parliamentary democracy is part of the liberal system, and so is doomed to rise or fall with it. Or is there no necessary connection between the one and the other? The analogy between the respective principles on which they are founded is undoubtedly striking. For if the essence of the parliamentary system is the free competition of elected political parties, on the other hand, the free competition of individuals is, as we have already seen, the essence of economic liberalism. From this analogy many critics have deduced the inevitable and mutual disappearance of both capitalism and parliamentarism, which, in this view, are regarded as parallel expressions of a common liberalism. And, undoubtedly, the joint disappearance of one and the other in Germany and in Italy seems to give countenance to this view. Nevertheless such a point of view is, in my opinion, an erroneous one. For altogether apart from the consideration that an analogy between things by no means signifies their identity, there is the more vital consideration that parliamentary institutions flourished in Switzerland, Spain, Great Britain and other European countries long before capitalism in any recognisable modern sense of the word was heard of, and that, moreover, these institutions have, in modern times, taken deep root where either industrial capitalism did not exist at all or only existed in a very rudimentary fashion, where, for instance, the

distinctive character of the community was feudal or rural but certainly not capitalistic. Our own society is a good example of a flourishing parliamentary democracy which is certainly free, as yet, from any considerable capitalistic domination, and in which, furthermore, the principles of democracy are better understood than they are in Great Britain or Northern Ireland.

One thing, however, must be conceded to the critics of parliamentarism. The lesson of recent history is conclusive on the point; it is that parliamentary democracy does not possess an independent principle of activity of its own; it is not something, so to speak, standing on its own feet, working on its own power, and kept going of its own momentum. Its stability is bound up with the stability of the community as a whole; it will be most stable and flourishing when there prevails throughout the community an attitude or temper of mind favourable to liberty and sensitive to justice, but these things—and here we come to the essence of the matter—can only exist where there is a widespread agreement among citizens on fundamentals, especially the fundamentals of social and personal morality, so that they are bound together by the possession of something approaching what we may call a common philosophy of life. The point is put very clearly by the philosopher, Professor Hoernle: "If democracy, and with it freedom in all its socially desirable forms, is threatened in the modern world, then, clearly, the moral of the preceding argument is that the preservation of democracy requires the preservation or re-establishment of certain fundamental convictions concerning the principles on which the community is to be organised. Without a common basis, there can be no unity and coherence. After all, if the democratic method is the method of reason and persuasion, how can you 'reason' with a man who denies your fundamental premises? Or how can you 'persuade' another, unless you both start from some common ground?"

Paradoxical as it may seem, freedom can flourish only within the framework of common convictions; and the society which could tolerate among its members an infinite diversity of convictions and actions on these convictions, has not yet been invented, and is, in fact, unthinkable.

Even freedom to differ, implying an agreement to differ, is possible only, either if two people can avoid having to live a common life, or else, if they are held together by bonds so strong that their

differences, though they may strain these bonds, are none the less kept in check by a deeper unity."

The great error of contemporary democracy has been to ignore the necessity of this "deeper unity" and to imagine that the method of majority judgement and decision is sufficient for all purposes. An analysis of the working of the system under present conditions will help to bring out the importance of this point. The essential characters of parliamentary democracy are : (1) the method of alternate government by political parties, (2) the constitution of the political parties concerned by means of popular election, and (3) the method of majority judgement and decision at all stages of the process of parliamentary government. It will be immediately evident that underlying the entire system is the understanding that political parties, whatever their differences may be, will accept the decision of the majority, that the outvoted minority will accept the will of the majority as its own, that, in short, all concerned will keep the rules of the parliamentary game. From the moment that one or other of the major parties refuses to play the game according to the rules, refuses to abide by the will of the majority, and has recourse to other methods, the situation ceases to be a constitutional one. The alternative to counting heads is breaking them, and so events move to revolution or civil war, the consequence being that the parliamentary system breaks down and force not persuasion becomes the arbiter.

What value is to be attached to the method of majority judgement and decision upon which the whole system hinges? Is it to be accepted as an absolute law from which there is no appeal, or is it subject to a higher law? On this point there is much difference of opinion, much confused thought, and latterly much mystification. There is a widespread tendency, especially in English speaking countries, to attribute to the will of the majority an infallibility which no Catholic would dream of attributing to the Pope. It is, of course, in some way bound up with the old idea that the people, as a whole, are seldom wrong in their judgement. The doctrine, *vox populi, vox Dei*, it is interesting to note, was first clearly enunciated by Alcuin, the great Anglo-Saxon scholar and councillor of Charlemagne; a similar idea found expression in the theory of conciliar supremacy and crops up here and there in the writings of medieval exponents of democracy; it was renewed by some of the greatest writers of the

pre-revolutionary christian tradition of democracy, as, for example, Bossuet and Hooker, and it was employed, as Lord Acton has pointed out, by Newman to support his theory of development. The precise significance of the idea of popular infallibility need not concern us here. For at no time have writers in the christian tradition regarded the voice of the majority as the same thing as the voice of the people. It was left to Rousseau to do this, and from him the notion of the infallibility of the majority will pass into modern political thought where it has grown to the proportions of a quasi-mystical faith. The other and more sober view, which passed almost unnoticed from Catholic political thought into the English parliamentary tradition, saw in the method of majority judgement and decision nothing more sacrosanct than a useful working rule, the most obvious, simple and convenient way of ascertaining the general sense of the community as a preliminary to putting it into effect. This common sense attitude has always been the strength of the English parliamentary tradition. Granted the initial democratic assumption that a government should rest on the consent of the governed, it is difficult to see how there could be a more effective method of establishing government on a popular basis than the method of majority judgement and decision. The argument which, in the democratic ideal, precedes a decision has to be clinched at some point by a vote, and that being so, it seems reasonable that decisions should go by majorities. Unanimity is seldom or ever possible; a two-thirds majority so seldom obtained that a government depending on it would be for most purposes reduced to impotence, so that in the end we are left with the method of majority decision or else we have to abandon any system of voting at all. There are, however, definite limits to its operation, beyond which it ceases to be valid, and these limits are usually recognised and defined in the form of constitutional guarantees or constitutions which we call fundamental laws because they are not open to be altered as is ordinary law by a majority decision. Unfortunately, the modern theory of democracy tends to set aside any limit or restriction of the majority principle, and as part of the general denial of absolute truth or unity of truth enthrones the majority judgement or belief as the expression of a sort of collective truth, relative in the sense that any other truth would be equally true, which some other majority decided upon, but absolute until that happens. So that if the majority decided that the sun was black, it would be undemocratic and heretical to

say that it was white, though it would be the height of orthodoxy if the majority changed its mind and came around to that view.

Conceived as an absolute principle and identified with a so-called general or universal will present in the community as imagined by Rousseau, majority rule soon resolves itself into a pernicious mystification, becomes, as has been well said, a piece of mysticism where mysticism is least appropriate, and in practice turns out to be a stick for the backs of minorities. Rousseau seems to have had a perfect genius for leading people astray, for most of the mystification that has grown up about what is called the principle of majority rule also began with him. He is the author of the theory of the general will which in one form or another lies at the root of all tendencies to canonise the majority will. By means of the so-called general will Rousseau proposed to reconcile pure democracy with representative democracy, and the manner in which he effected their reconciliation must always remain one of the curiosities of political thought.

"The people of England think they are free," wrote Rousseau in his *Social Contract*, "but they are greatly mistaken. They are free only during the election of members of parliament; once these are elected, they are slaves, they are nothing. In the short moments of their liberty the use they make of it shows that they deserve to lose it." At first sight this severe and not wholly unjustified judgement appears to write Rousseau down as an opponent of parliamentary democracy, and so undoubtedly he was in as much as he insisted that parliamentary sovereignty is incompatible with the sovereignty of the people. Much might be said in favour of Rousseau's point of view if only he had maintained it consistently. This he was unable or at least failed to do because his theory involved the rejection of representative democracy in any shape or form. Having before his mind, as a model, the primitive Swiss democracy in which the citizens came together and without any sort of delegation directly legislated for and governed themselves, pure democracy, unadulterated by any element of representation, was his original ideal. It suffered, however, from the serious drawback that it was impossible in practice in any community larger than village communities such had existed in Switzerland during the late middle ages, so that Rousseau had either to content himself with resigning democracy to the angels which it was his first impulse to do (he says somewhere democracy is a thing for angels and not for men) or else he had to find some way out of the dilemma in which

representative democracy and pure democracy are opposed to one another. The solution he found supposed the existence in the community of a general will which was neither the will of one individual nor of all together, but something over and above and at the same time identical with the community as a whole. In short he hit on the idea of a collective personality, an enormous Mr. Everyman who was at once his own magnificent self and the better self of each and every one of us. It is true that, notwithstanding all the modern fuss made about him, Mr. Everyman has stubbornly persisted in remaining a complete abstraction. But for all its ineradicable abstractness the myth of the collectivity has proved to be one of the most formidable instruments ever put into the hands of tyrants. It is in the name of disembodied collectivities of race and class that Lenin, Stalin and Hitler have been hunting down and seeking to make an end of the human freedom inherent in personality which is, after all, the most distinct, concrete and living thing in our everyday wide awake world.

The essential point about the general will or spirit is that it has to embody itself, to assume flesh and blood, or else remain a wraith hovering mysteriously about society. At all costs, the collectivity must attain "a local habitation and a name." The incarnation of the German race in Hitler, and the personification of the proletariat in Stalin, are notable examples of the collectivity so localising itself. Rousseau, on the other hand, was less ambitious. For him it was enough that the general will should express itself through the voice of the majority, transmitting its messages through the majority in much the same manner as the spirits of the departed are supposed to send their messages through a human medium in the spiritualistic séance. Rousseau's procedure may be described briefly as follows. He starts off by denying the possibility of democracy in terms of representation or any sort of delegation only to set up at a later stage the fiction of a general or universal will in the community, which, by a further fiction, is said to express itself in the will of the majority. The whole performance resembles a conjuring trick in which the majority will is made to disappear only to reappear later in the guise of the general will. We need not delay any longer to consider the mathematico-mystical theory of democracy resulting from the identification of the majority will with the general will conjured up by Rousseau, except to point out the mathematical absurdities it involves. It leads, for example, to the proposition that when a part is more than a half it

equals the whole, or stated in terms of votes that out of 100 persons if 51 of them vote in favour of a proposal instead of there being left a minority of 49 the 51 has increased to 100. A majority is always full per cent. However we regard the doctrine of the divine right of 51 per cent., as majority rule has been caustically described, and however much it may be rationalised, it none the less remains a much less rational doctrine than the divine right of kings which it caricatures. There existed for the anointed king, however extreme his pretensions, an objective standard of morality beyond and above himself and by which he was bound, whereas for the divine majority there is no standard of truth or justice beyond itself. It is its own justification and its own source of morality, and since standards change with majorities, the majority principle must in the end, unless referred to a higher principle, resolve itself into power, that is, the rule not of right but of force.

One of the most remarkable features of the present situation in Europe is the manner in which the friends and supporters of communism defend the infallibility of majorities. Indeed, the attitude not only of sympathisers with Bolshevism but of liberals in general is such as to provoke doubt as to the sincerity of their devotion to democracy in general and majority rule in particular. A majority, for example, in Germany or Italy or Austria or even Ireland has, it is plain to be seen, none of the sanctity attached to a majority in Mexico or Spain. As for Russia, since in that country only proletarians have rights, and since all proletarians must, in virtue of the collective will, be of the same mind as Stalin, there the question of minorities or majorities is supposed not to arise at all. There is complete unanimity. On the other hand, Red minorities outside the U.S.S.R. are supposed in some mysterious way to take the place of the majority as the vehicle of the general will. The case of Spain provides a striking illustration of this sort of quick turn political artistry. The indignation of British liberals against the Spanish insurgents on the ground that, as a minority, in no circumstances were they justified in rebelling against the legal government is matched only by the ardour with which they took up the cause of the minority of Spanish Communists, who in 1934 rebelled against the majority government then in office.

It is, of course, only fair to add that many who call themselves liberals would be the first to repudiate the dishonesty bred of socialist or communist fanaticism and that, in fact, the myth of the

general will was never looked on with favour by moderate liberals. The theory of the general will was really alien to the individualistic philosophy, which incidentally brings out the remarkable fact that Rousseau fathered opposing individualistic and collectivist tendencies. It was the nationalist and socialist schools of thought that drew out and developed the collectivist strain in the tangle of his ideas. There was, about the middle of the last century, a brief alliance between leading Catholic thinkers in France and the leaders of moderate liberalism, and it is interesting to note they were at one in repudiating the doctrine of the general will, the outcome of which they held was certain to be despotism. About that time the Catholic historian, Alexis de Tocqueville, who was himself one of the foremost champions of moderate liberalism, wrote : " I reject as both impious and detestable the maxim that in matters of government the majority has the right to do anything. For me it is impossible to give several of my fellow citizens the absolute dominion which I refuse to one."

Reverting to the case of Spain. It is significant because it furnishes the most complete example of that process by which the christian leaven in the theory of democracy was eliminated, and the whole democratic heritage transformed into a doctrinaire barbarism which leaves no place for human rights, and which in practice perverts the majority principle so as to destroy the most elementary of these rights. All the motivation for that fanatical war upon religion and personality transpires, with extraordinary distinctness, in the Spanish episode. Throughout the world liberals have justified the outbreak of primitive savagery in Spain on the ground that the majority has the right to do anything. Yet apart from its irrationality here again the appeal to the majority principle is plainly dishonest, for the results of the Spanish general election of February, 1936, show that although the popular front coalition obtained a majority of seats they failed to win a majority of votes. The actual figures were, 4,356,000 votes for the popular front candidates, and for their opponents 4,910,000. A corrupt electoral system and tactics of intimidation during and after the election gave the popular front 270 seats in parliament as against 200 obtained by the Opposition notwithstanding that the latter had a majority of more than 400,000 votes. So that the popular front government, although legally constituted, was not the choice of the majority of the Spanish people. It has been interesting to watch liberals and revolutionaries the whole world over clutching at the

shadow of legality, and in its name justifying or condoning the excesses committed by the supporters of the Spanish government. Taken at their face value the precepts of liberalism have now been reduced to the one great precept "Thou shalt obey the majority," and so the only one mortal sin is to resist the will of the majority, no matter how senseless, brutal or barbarous the expression of that will may happen to be. There could be no more conclusive demonstration of the utter bankruptcy of European liberalism than that it should have, at the first test of events, hastened to throw to the winds the entire liberal creed of freedom of thought and discussion, of the infeasible rights of the individual against the state, of the sacred duty of resistance to tyranny, and thus openly and absolutely should have committed itself to the cause of Red despotism where, for some considerable time now, its true allegiance has lain.

It is absurd in any case to suppose that a minority will obey a majority decision which it regards as unjust and opposed to its vital interests and beliefs. The only question will be whether disobedience is feasible, whether there is a reasonable prospect of successfully resisting the majority will. If for thousands of years men have broken what they believed to be the commandments of God, what likelihood is there that they will cheerfully obey the commandments of the majority of their fellow citizens, that they will, with a better grace, render obedience to Tom, Dick or Harry. Clearly the incentive to obedience will be infinitely less when the only sanction of the majority is simply that it happens to be the majority. Two examples which lie within our own immediate experience illustrate very clearly the inability of the method of majority decision to resolve peaceably or by persuasion a conflict of interests and principles which go deeper than law or convention. The first is afforded by the successful defiance of the British Parliament by Orange Ulster in 1914. It could not have succeeded were it not for the refusal of one of the great British Parties to abide by the majority decision of their own parliament in favour of Home Rule for Ireland. The Irish had accepted the proposition which the English boasted to be the very life principle of their political civilization, namely, that parliament was sovereign and a majority decision within parliament absolutely binding. It was the discovery that the parliamentary system was not as sacrosanct as it was advertised to be and as some Irishmen, in all good faith, believed it to

be, that, in fact, it was a game which many of the most important English players were not going to play according to the rules once Ireland looked like winning which finally decided the Irish people to abandon parliamentary and constitutional methods and to have recourse to physical force instead. It was said, not without a considerable show of justification, that in the parliamentary game the dice were heavily loaded against Ireland, and that in any case the English had never conceded anything except to force. A still more striking example of the breakdown of the parliamentary system is forthcoming in the case of the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921. The Dáil accepted the Treaty by a small majority, but the minority, who regarded its acceptance as a betrayal of national principle, refused to accept the majority decision, with the result that the issue was put to the test of civil war.

The moral of the story is quite evident. The agreement of political parties to differ from one another but to differ in such wise that they can compromise or resolve their differences within parliament depends on the existence of deeper loyalties on which they are fundamentally at one. In this context, I may refer again to Professor Hoernle who makes the following acute observations : " The moment such fundamental agreement breaks down—as it has broken down or is in the process of breaking down in many States—because the citizen-body is riven by racial, or nationalistic, or economic-class antagonisms, democracy fails to banish the spectres of revolution and civil war (or, at least, the persecution of one section by another). Democratic institutions then become the instruments of the race, or the national group, or the economic class which is defending its power and vested interest. Democracy, then, employs force and compulsion like a tyranny. It ends by denying the liberties which it had been its pride to guarantee. It may even rationalise its betrayal of liberty by pleading that it is denying liberty for the sake of defending it. No wonder that, in these circumstances, democracy is being replaced by dictatorships which achieve the desired result with more efficiency and less make-believe."

The optimistic parliamentarians of the 19th century imagined that the principle of parliamentary government on a basis of majority decision, once it had been established in a community, would work with the unfailing and beneficial regularity of a natural law. What they seem never to have realised was that the majority principle

itself depends, as Professor W. K. Hancock has said, "on an inarticulate major premiss," in other words, the use of majority decision to register agreement on all particulars is possible only in those communities which already possess agreement upon essentials. If nineteenth-century parliamentarians closed their eyes to this obvious truth, it was because, being for the most part steeped in the philosophy of liberalism, they set little store by agreement on essentials which suggested to their mind a return to fixed and traditional ways of thought and morality. There was something reactionary about anything that suggested fixity or unity of belief. Disagreement, difference of opinion, the strife of ideas, was, in the liberal philosophy, the very essence of any creative activity. It was rather by their difference than by their unities that men and societies made progress. Here liberalism betrays its theoretic kinship with Marxian and Darwinian materialism. Generalise the liberal cult of the necessary flux and reflux of ideas, creating by their perpetual strife the conditions of progress, and extend the strife to all planes of existence, and you get the whole murderous dialectic of the Marxian and Darwinian and Militarist nightmare of conflict as the path to perfection. There was, however, this fundamental difference of attitude between them, that apart from the conflict being interpreted as primarily a conflict of ideas, liberalism pictured the struggle not in terms of violence but rather in terms of the healthy and good natured rivalry of a football match or a game of cricket. This pathetic illusion sprang from the liberal misconception of human nature, as being both wholly good and reasonable, so that the aspirations and actions of men in the mass would inevitably conduce to the progress of civilization, as it were, in an ascending straight line. Granted the liberal view of human nature, the conclusions at which they arrived were necessary conclusions. But since their view of human nature was false these necessary conclusions were also false. One error gave rise to another. Had it not been for the liberal optimistic view of human nature parliamentarians could not have fallen into the error of supposing that there is a moral quality in numbers, or that a thousand persons are necessarily wiser than one person. And so had it not been for doctrinaire liberalism it is scarcely conceivable that there could have arisen the modern arithmetical theory of democracy rejected long ago by Aristotle when he rejected the counting of heads as a method of arriving at the truth. Actually,

the sole truth behind the doctrine of the general or majority will is that democracy is possible only where there is an underlying consciousness of unity in a society.

Democracy is not for all societies and all times. If it is to be anything more than oligarchy or despotism tempered by "bread and circuses," which is what most of the herd democracies are to-day, conditions must be extraordinarily favourable ; the climate must be temperate and society well outside the earthquake zone. For the more violence, whether of war or of revolution, the less democracy. To this law there are no exceptions. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that there is less real democracy in the world to-day than there was at any time in the Middle Ages. In fact, the Middle Ages afford almost the only example of a democracy that achieved and maintained a prolonged equilibrium. This is a very significant fact. For there has seldom been a less liberal and never a more organic or unanimous state of society than that achieved by medieval civilization.

Unanimity as opposed to dissent, faith as opposed to scepticism, are the preconditions of democracy in the best sense of the word. Unanimity does not involve the petrification of thought ; it simply implies that truths once apprehended are not thrown aside in the thirst for novelty but are held firmly, so that both thought and action do not lose their way and keep going round in a vicious circle but are oriented steadily towards a definite objective. Liberty, it is true, is a need vital to human growth, but liberty to be creative must be enlisted in the service of truth. Pursued for its own sake, it becomes a delusive phantom. Similarly, development is necessary in any human society, but development is a very different thing from change for its own sake, which is indeed nothing but an appetite for destruction. Democracy works best when institutions are stable and adapted to the needs of those who live under them ; when the minds of men are moved by common aspirations ; when political, social and intellectual assent proceeds from a common faith ; when these several unities work together to create and preserve in the minds and hearts of men a contented and homogeneous attitude towards life. Then indeed democracy is a reality. On the other hand, it works worst or ceases to work at all when these deeper unities are absent, as they are for the most part in the liberal societies of to-day, or when they are imposed mechanically from without, which is largely the case in what we call the totalitarian states.

What are these deeper unities in the absence of which democracy is merely an empty shell? Some of them we noted in the course of our argument, and broadly speaking they are summed up in culture and religion. These questions have been treated with great insight and wealth of learning by the French philosopher, Jacques Maritain, and to clinch the point I have been making, it is unnecessary for me to do more than to quote the following passage from his *Saint Thomas Aquinas*: "The unity of culture is determined in the first place and above all by a certain common philosophical structure, a certain metaphysical and moral attitude, a certain common scale of values, in a word, a certain common conception of the universe, of man and human life, of which social, linguistic and juridical structures, are, so to speak, the embodiment."

"This metaphysical unity has long been broken—not certainly completely destroyed, but broken and, as it were, obliterated, in the West. The drama of Western culture consists in the fact that its stock of common metaphysics has been reduced to an utterly inadequate minimum, so that only matter now holds it together, and matter is incapable of keeping anything together. The drama is all the more tragic for us because everything at the moment has to be recreated, everything to be put in place again in our European house."

So obsessed with political and economic questions are we nowadays that we are apt to overlook the deeper levels of society and consciousness where the human drama really unfolds itself. Politics and economics are the most fugitive and superficial part of life, and the form they take is decided by impulses rooted in the deeper life of religion and culture. It is now the fashion to regard these things as by-products of economics, to look on economic factors as the only constant and primary factors, and indeed in this way communism proposes to explain the whole history of humanity. Similarly, the idea at the bottom of Nazism is that all manifestations of religion, culture and history, are racial and political. One view is as false as the other and the fallacy in both is that they look at the world upside down. Suppose that the communist dream were to come true, that the millennium of freedom and abundance for all were to dawn at last, would we be justified in assuming, as communists do, that humanity would live happily ever afterwards? Surely it would be a very superficial view. We are not without materials for forming a judgment on the matter. For in the life of the revolutionary rich of great cities like

London and New York we are in the presence of "an instalment of the millenium in full flower." And if, as Wyndham Lewis remarks, the proof of the millennial pudding is in the eating, the results, as observed in the life of the wealthy, are certainly far from encouraging. They have everything that the world can give in the vulgar dream of materialism, and yet who will say that happiness is the conspicuous feature of their existence? We do not have to travel very far to learn that a man poor in the world's goods is often richest in happiness. Nor does it require much imagination to foresee that the age of universal leisure and universal wealth will have its problems not less difficult and tormenting than the problems of poverty and unemployment which afflict us to-day. That very shrewd judge of human nature, Dr. Johnson, put his finger on a fundamental truth when he said : "He who lets out the fear of poverty lets in the fear of death." How true the saying is we shall know if ever we enter the promised land of abundance and security.

These reflections are not intended to induce an attitude of passive resignation towards the economic evils by which we are surrounded. What I wish to suggest is that economic evils are not the only ones, nor is the economic approach the only or even the most important approach to the problems of our time. Could there be a more striking proof of this truth than the events happening all around us? Of all the factors making for a world war on an unprecedented scale the economic factor is probably the least important. For the decisive factors we have to seek in the realm of spirit, where all wars and revolutions begin and end.

If there is one lesson more than another to be learned from the modern history of democracy, communism, fascism, and all the other current ideologies, it is, I submit, that, so far as we are concerned, we should avoid them all like the plague. None of them bears any fruitful relation to the problems which concern us. Our problems are, in their essence, cultural and religious, and as such have nothing in common with any of the millennial policies of revolutionary human change and endless progress.

IV.

FUNCTIONAL DEMOCRACY

FROM time to time Catholics from abroad have commented on a remarkable contradiction which exists in Irish life. To us it is not so evident perhaps because it is so familiar. It consists in this. As a people we possess a philosophy of life in the highest degree homogeneous and christian, and yet that philosophy has notably failed to express itself in an appropriate and clear cut social or national code. The main reason for this anomaly is, I suggest, that we have taken over with the English language too much of the English liberal tradition. Hence there is a liberal squint in our way of looking at things. We think it perfectly natural that religion should be for the most part segregated from the rest of life, that religion and everyday affairs should belong to separate and watertight compartments. Let the Church mind its own business and keep out of politics is a point of view by no means confined to Germany or Russia. It finds expression here from time to time amongst extreme nationalists on the one hand and amongst extreme partisans of Anglo-Saxon imperialism on the other. Its object in all cases is, of course, ultimately the same, namely, the imprisonment of religion in the sacristy, so that it may cease to exercise any real or permanent influence on the course of human life. Another result of anglicisation has been that so deeply enslaved are we to the English political tradition that we have not yet awakened to the fact that the neutral or half-and-half-liberal state is, for all practical purposes, a thing of the past. So we continue to take for granted as a part of the order of nature the present uneasy compromise between state action and private capitalism, which, in the case of the so-called democracies of Europe and America, is nothing else than a half way house to one form or other of totalitarianism.

Turning to the totalitarian states we may learn two valuable

lessons, all the more valuable because what the totalitarian states are to-day the so-called democratic states will for the most part be to-morrow. We learn, in the first place, that economic forces cannot be allowed to run riot. Where that happens sooner or later comes a breakdown, resolving itself in terms of dictatorship. We learn, in the second place, that the parliamentary system is neither a suitable nor adequate instrument in social and economic matters. The natural function of the parliamentary system is a political one, and there is abundant evidence that by no means can it be adapted to the positive, continuous and highly complex task of performing economic as well as political functions. The attempt to do so impales the parliamentary system on one or other of the horns of the following dilemma. For its failure is inevitable if it adheres to parliamentary methods, whereas success involves a state system of economics, which depends in turn on the abandonment of the parliamentary system in favour of a state dictatorship. Either way parliamentary democracy is compromised and eventually goes by the board. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that any statist solution of the economic problem destroys at the same time the basis of the parliamentary system and the conditions necessary to personal responsibility. Yet some social control there must be, for it is not possible to return to the individualistic liberalism which, with fatal results, abandoned economics to the so-called natural law of supply and demand.

If we examine the parliamentary system in the light of past and present events it will be evident that I have not over-stated the facts when I said that the parliamentary system is neither fitted for economic purposes, nor can it survive any thoroughgoing application to economic purposes. Historically, parliament came into being as a consultative and judicial body, developing later its legislative functions. And it remains a system more suited to legislative than to executive purposes. On a broad view one of the major factors in the decline of parliamentarism has been its inability to cope with economic factors. This inability is inherent in the system and is, as a matter of fact, no reflection on it. For it is due simply to the fact that the system itself is designed for political and not economic functions. Yet in consequence of the situation created by economic liberalism it found itself compelled to undertake economic tasks which were really contrary to its nature. With the transition from private capitalism based on free competition to state and public

ownership, the parliamentary state gradually changed from being in the main a legislative and judicial to an executive state called upon to deal directly with the bases of economic life. As soon as the state thus extends its activities in order to take charge of the complicated economic process a stable government becomes an absolute necessity. Now this is what the parliamentary system is so frequently unable to supply, particularly where the community is divided against itself, as happens when the Marxist doctrine of class war commands widespread support, and where in consequence none of the parties involved in the struggle for political power is strong enough to command a safe and permanent majority. There will be general agreement that the breakdown of the parliamentary system in this way has been a main factor in the emergence of the totalitarian dictatorships. So that, paradoxical though it may seem, individualistic liberalism in creating the conditions of the modern system of capitalism paved the way for the destruction of parliamentary democracy.

Another contributory factor in the decline of parliamentarism has been the militarisation of states. No system organised primarily for *power*, whether economic or military, will long tolerate the parliamentary system, which must appear to worshippers of power as at the best a nuisance and at the worst a source of weakness. And so it undoubtedly is from the point of view of any system that regards power as the supreme consideration. A nation preparing for or actually engaged in war must possess a highly centralised all-powerful executive, and it is of the essence of the whole matter that extreme centralisation in any shape or form is inseparable in practice from dictatorship. The dictatorship may wear a parliamentary veil, but it is none the less in the full sense of the word a dictatorship. Many who will be prepared to concede that centralisation for war undoubtedly carries with it the destruction of individual and parliamentary liberties will, however, not so readily concede that the same is true of centralisation directed to economic purposes as, for example, in present day Russia. State socialists are necessarily committed to the opposite view, and must hold, unless like the communists they are prepared openly to disavow liberty, that it is possible to arrive at socialism by way of parliament and to preserve it on a parliamentary basis. Events have demonstrated both views to be illusions. From opposite directions the Russian and German revolutions show that Lenin was right in regarding evolutionary socialism on a parliamentary

basis as a complete illusion. With equal conclusiveness the Russian experiment has demonstrated that socialism, when established, cannot be preserved on a parliamentary basis, but must fatally end up in a highly centralised military and economic oligarchy.

This is indeed the way of all collectivism. This point needs to be emphasised, for it is frequently argued that there is no reason why collectivism should take the form of state collectivism, that it is easy to envisage circumstances in which the collectivist principle could be applied to large scale enterprises, co-existing with individual initiative and the ownership of property on a small scale. Without going into the matter deeply at present the weight of the evidence tends to the conclusion that it is impossible for a state, once it launches out on a programme of collectivism, to stop short of full totalitarianism. Either you must run the community like an army with a totalitarian state dictatorship owning everything and directing everybody according to the plans of the economic general staff, in which case you must suppress individual initiative, abolish private property, bring everything under state control, as anything outside it is calculated to dislocate the national plan. Or, on the other hand, you must aim at the devolution of economic and political power on the ground that an excessive concentration of power is an insuperable obstacle in the way of social and individual responsibility. The choice therefore lies between the unitary and bureaucratic type of society in which sovereignty, economic as well as political, is concentrated in the hands of a ruling oligarchy, calling itself the state, and the pluralistic or functional type of society in which sovereignty is diffused throughout its members. Those who believe in the dignity of the human personality will not hesitate to choose the latter. We, in Ireland, are in the happy position that we can choose what road we take. Not so, however, with most other peoples. Involved in a vicious circle of wars and revolutions, they feel themselves fatally committed to centralisation *for power*. They cannot choose, either because no choice is allowed them by their rulers or because their course appears to be determined by the first of all laws, the law of self preservation.

The case of England may be cited as an exception to most of what has been said regarding the inherent tendency of modern industrial states to totalitarianism, and as certainly disproving the contention that collectivism and centralisation are incompatible with the continuance of parliamentary democracy. The exceptional position of

the English state is, however, more apparent than real. Moreover, there special factors which give English parliamentarism its distinctive character of stability and adaptability. The British parliamentary tradition is in many ways unique ; it has grown from roots deep in English history, spreading its branches far and wide. But perhaps the most significant thing about English parliamentarism has been that the anti-christian and revolutionary current of Continental liberalism failed to make any deep impression on its essentially conservative and native character. The great nonconformist revival, with its strict standards of evangelical christianity and respectability, arrived just in time to check the tide of radical and revolutionary ideas spreading from Continental sources. It was in the economic rather than in the political field that the new liberal ideas took effect. But above and beyond all it is necessary to take into account that the British parliament has been the joint creation of an aristocratic and a middle class tradition, and despite the recent growth of the Labour movement, the parliamentary machine still remains in the hands of the ruling class created by the alliance between the post reformation aristocracy and the new industrial plutocracy. For all practical purposes both politics and economics continue to be controlled and manipulated by the representatives of the upper classes, men who have received their education in the same public schools and universities, and who in all essentials possess a fundamental identity of interest and outlook. Hence in England the party system was until recently largely polite or impassioned make-believe as the case might be. Amongst the many evidences of its non-party character is the fact that English politics has not as yet bred in large numbers the pest of professional politicians as well as the fact that in time of crisis the party system is able to give place without a hitch to governments of concentration. The coalition government during the war and the national government of the period of the financial crisis of 1929-32 are clear cases in point.

The question arises whether the special conditions to which the English parliamentary system owed its stability are not now in process of disintegration. In Great Britain, as in all the great industrial states, government is becoming more and more a matter of mass suggestion and hypnotism by means of press, radio and cinema. King Demos has arrived and his arrival has created a new situation for the English governing class. Indeed for the first time in English history

the doctrine of international revolution has captured key positions from English nationalism, and the language of international anti-christian politics, with all its catch words and parrot-cries, has become the second language of many Englishmen. That the influence of red internationalism in English politics is widespread and strong may be judged from the fate of the Hoare-Laval Pact a few years ago. Something unprecedented had happened in English politics. For the first time in modern English history the mob had, so to speak, invaded the sacred precincts of the Foreign Office and dictated international policy.

There can be no doubt that a new and unpredictable factor has entered English politics with socialism. Up to the present the Trade Union movement has acted as a break on revolutionary socialism. How long it will have the inclination or the ability to do so is a matter which depends largely on the international situation. The more dangerous the external situation the less danger there is of revolutionary action at home. But one thing is certain. When, and if, socialism becomes a living issue in English politics the two party system ceases to be workable. If socialists are in earnest in carrying through the radical transformation of society on Marxist lines, there can be no common ground on which they can meet and co-operate with the parties that accept its existing foundations. Let us suppose that a socialist government were to come to power and took the precaution of staffing the fighting services with men in sympathy with its programme. Would such a government be willing to yield office to a government pledged to undo its work? Socialists of the school of Sir Stafford Cripps have never disguised their belief that a change on the radical scale contemplated by socialism to be effective would have to be made irreversible. Hence they affirm the necessity of a socialist dictatorship. Granted the desirability of socialism at all costs, they are undoubtedly right in insisting on the necessity of an eventual dictatorship. For no society can envisage the possibility of a change from capitalism to socialism and vice versa as a result of a general election every few years. The effect of the increasing danger to the existence of the British Empire may, it is true, well be to postpone indefinitely the rise to power of socialism in Great Britain. But to meet that danger any government at all will more and more be driven along the path of collectivism, which beyond a certain point is incompatible with the parliamentary party system, so that whatever happens, its prospects of survival, even in Great Britain, are far from bright.

Before we leave the subject of collectivism it is worth while to recall that it was the central issue in the intellectual controversies of thirty years ago between the exponents of state socialism, guild socialism and distributivism. In retrospect, one cannot but wonder at the prophetic foresight that Mr. Hilaire Belloc showed in his book *The Servile State*, especially when we remember that it was published before the Great War and the Russian revolution came to furnish the first specimen of modern collectivism in action. Mr. Belloc's conclusions are well worth noting, for nobody realised so clearly the way the wind was blowing. Through the breach of European unity caused by the reformation have come two false social philosophies which err by opposite extremes, individualism and collectivism. Each contains a substratum of truth. But the full truth lies between these extremes and is to be found in its fullness in Catholic philosophy which affirms that while the human person, the family, and private property are prior to the state and founded on natural rights independent of the state, yet the human being is not, like the Lutheran ego, a prisoner in a narrow cell, or like the creature of the Benthamites a mass of mere appetite. He is a social being and as such essentially bound up with others and dependent on them. Private property without which personal freedom and responsibility is impossible carries with it, therefore, social duties ; the community has rights and obligations in respect of property which have been neglected in the era of expanding capitalism, and the consequence of this neglect has been the virtual destruction of private property in any real sense of the word in the industrialised communities. Any system of collectivism, according to Mr. Belloc, would inevitably lead to a state of affairs in which all power, economic and political, would finally be centralised in the hands of a privileged oligarchy, exercising absolute authority over all its subjects through a hierarchy of bureaucratic agents. Thus state socialism would be nothing else than the old capitalism " writ large," with the officials of the state replacing the former independent capitalists, and with wage slavery dominating the life not merely of one section but of all citizens. There was some possibility of resisting the old capitalism because its power was divided up among individual capitalists ; but there would be none at all of resisting the new system of state socialism or state capitalism which would be infinitely more powerful than the old, because it would be universal and would have at its disposal all the instruments of

coercion in the armoury of the state. While Mr. Belloc insisted on private property as necessary to human freedom he was equally insistent on the necessity of a systematic restraint on the holding and conveyance of property. Otherwise history would be likely to repeat itself; property would re-concentrate, and so landlordism and capitalism would return again. To correct this tendency, he proposed the formation of co-operative guilds. The broad lines of his political thought mark Mr. Belloc out as a political thinker of the first rank, as he is undoubtedly one of the few modern men of letters who has written poetry and prose good enough to last. The unpopularity of his thought is said to be due to his partiality, but if Mr. Belloc is partial, it is not because his judgement is biased, but because of his single minded devotion to the great and permanent realities of civilisation and his freedom from the unclean spirit of the age, in which he recalls another great political thinker, Machiavelli. Be that as it may, who but Mr. Belloc had the vision to foresee the future of socialism precisely as it has actualised itself.

The mention of guilds must not be taken to imply a return to the Middle Ages. To begin with, the medieval world for all its greatness was by no means the ideal world enthusiasts for medievalism have pictured, and even were it all that they claim, anyhow it is past and gone, and the essential thing about the past is that as such it is dead and can no more return to us nor we to it than a person who is dead. But just as a person may leave behind him an example and an achievement that do not die with him, so the achievement of the Middle Ages demonstrates, among other things, one of the first principles of social philosophy, namely, that the most stable and creative type of society results from a balance of powers and institutions rather than from their mechanical unification in the style of the modern unitary state. It would be difficult to imagine anything more unlike the highly centralised, strictly standardised, alternatively excited or hypnotised modern mass democracies than the democracy of the Middle Ages. The latter was, as we know, "a community of communities." Corporate bodies of all sorts—guilds and monasteries, boroughs and shires, manors and municipalities—combined with one another to give society its free and organic character. And surely if we wish to aim at a free democracy, this rather than the servile state, ancient or modern, should be our model. It is something that the genius of the Middle Ages enables us to take our bearings in the deepening confusion and darkness of the modern world.

As things are to-day, the first essential is to know what to avoid, and by avoiding liberalism on the one hand and pagan totalitarianism on the other we shall at least have made a good beginning. It is too often overlooked that liberalism and totalitarianism for all their apparent or real opposition to one another really belong to the same family. One follows the other in the social series, the latter appearing *dialectically*, if I may borrow that much used and much abused term, by way of reaction to the former. Their common denominator is profound hostility to mind, personality, freedom, all of which values are indissolubly bound up in one another, and as a consequence the reduction of society to its constituent human atoms, so that men are linked together mechanically rather than organically in the sense that social unity is imposed by the action of arbitrary forces external to the individual. On the other hand, a free society is a society pivoted on human personality as the highest human value. But it is idle to imagine that human personality can have any meaning apart from divine personality. What is this personality, of which so much is said these days, if there is nothing higher than itself to which it can be referred. To this question the materialistic psychologists have already replied that in effect personality is "a reaction mass" in no wise differing from any other combination of matter. The truth is that only in a society believing in a *transcendent* God can personality have any permanent meaning or value attached to it.

It is time to return to practical questions. That the substantial separation of economics and politics is necessary we know from the results that have followed where they have merged as in state socialism. But although separated, they must not be abandoned to the free play of natural instincts. That is the lesson we learn from anarchism and liberalism. What is required therefore is to relate politics to economics in such wise that neither shall absorb the other, the social economy functioning on its own foundations, while to parliament as the representative of the political economy is reserved the supreme authority. Parliament stands for the nation as a whole. A man expresses himself in a great variety of ways. As a citizen he casts his vote at elections or serves on public bodies. But, however important these activities may be, they represent only a small part of his total activity. A much greater part goes into his work or function. Why, then, should his economic status receive less care and attention than the status he possesses as a citizen? The type of

economic organisation I have in mind is called functional because it turns on the particular function or work performed by the individual person. The organisation of a functional society, using that term in its widest sense, involves that each functional group, whether it be political or economic, has its own sphere of jurisdiction and occupies its own place in the hierarchy of offices and functions which together, and in their proper degree, constitute society. Just as the qualities of personality must be at equilibrium in order that it may yield its highest potentialities, so the apt arrangement of social functions is essential to social equilibrium. The social principle that we have been outlining is the "principle of subsidiary function" referred to in *Quadragesimo Anno* as "fundamental, unshakeable and unchangeable." Like all great principles it is a simple one, and the following quotation from the Encyclical brings out its implications very clearly: "Just as it is wrong to withdraw from the individual and to commit to the community at large what private enterprise and industry can accomplish, so, too, it is an injustice, a grave evil, and a disturbance of right order for a larger and higher organisation to arrogate to itself functions which can be performed efficiently by smaller and lower bodies." The reasons given for this proposition are also reasons for the rejection of totalitarianism in any shape or form: "Of its very nature the true aim of all social activity should be to help individual members of the social body, but never to destroy or absorb them. Because this principle of subsidiary function has not been observed, the social order has perished."

What do we mean by a functional group in the economic application of the term? A functional group is a combination of all the workers of every kind, administrative, executive and productive, engaged in any particular industry. It includes those who work with their brains as well as those who contribute their labour. Directors, managers, engineers—everybody who works in the enterprise—are entitled to membership. Similarly, a functional group in agriculture might apply to all the persons engaged in one branch or other of agricultural production or might consist of a local organisation of farmers on the lines of a highly developed co-operative society. The relationship of non-working owners and shareholders to the functional group is admittedly a question which goes to the roots of functional groups in industry. In this connection I venture the opinion that the privileged position at present occupied by shareholders in industrial

concerns, bound up as it is with the present system of credit, cannot be regarded as just and must in the nature of things be either very considerable modified or got rid of altogether. As I am not an economist, it is not within my competence to make precise proposals as to how this is to be done, other than to say that there can be no abiding social stability till it is done. My purpose here is not to make in detail the case for a functionally organised system of economics but rather to show that, in approaching the economic problem from the point of view of function, we are approaching it from the only side which promises a just and lasting solution.

Clearly, no fundamental reform such as we have envisaged can be effected without the collaboration of the state. Under modern conditions the role of the state necessarily extends over the whole field of society. But state action need not involve the evils of statism so long as our rulers are actuated by sound principles and know where to draw the line. It is not when the state is, so to speak, spreading itself outwards and all around that the harm is done. It is rather when it proceeds to act *in depth* and to level down all other institutions and bodies. The effect of functional organisation is precisely to prevent this sort of destructive state action, since it interposes between the individual and the state a great variety of intermediate and more or less autonomous social groups. We need have no hesitation, therefore, in invoking state assistance in order to bring these functional groups into existence. Indeed we cannot dispense with its assistance, for as things are no functional society can institute itself spontaneously. It must be constituted by action from above as well as from below. Moreover, even when constituted, it cannot do without some principle of co-ordination and since, in the last analysis, economics is but one function of the national life, the last word properly belongs to parliament which stands for the national life as a whole.

The organisation of professions or occupations in this manner is viewed by Labour with much suspicion. It seems to them to cut across the opposition which exists between wage earners on the one hand and owners and shareholders on the other. The formula "no strikes and no lock outs," which is associated with contemporary experiments in functional organisation, redoubles their suspicions, so that they are inclined to see in the whole thing merely a covert attack on the independence of the Trade Unions with a view to the perpetuation of the capitalistic *status quo*. The first of these objections implies that

Labour leaders regard themselves as having something like a vested interest in the class struggle, and in so far as this is the case they write themselves down as Marxists, committed to the Marxist programme of class war, class dictatorship and the rest. As to the danger to the Trade Unions the first thing to note is that state socialism, which is really the same thing as state capitalism, respects the freedom of trade unions as little as Fascism or Nazism. In Russia the trade unions are nothing else than state departments for the regimentation of labour.

To set their minds at rest labour men should go directly to the social Encyclicals, *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*, where, if they are not already Marxist in intention, they will find the answer to all their doubts and difficulties, and where they will find furthermore fully formulated a conception of society radically different from that of communism or fascism whose doctrine is unitary and statist through and through. *Quadragesimo Anno* prescribes a close association of trades unions and functional groups but no fusion of them. It expressly indicates trades unions as "free associations." The right of free association by labour cannot in justice be taken away so long as the present division of society into two distinct classes of owners and propertyless workers lasts. But nobody with any knowledge of history can believe that such a division is likely to be lasting. The existence of mutually opposed groups, practically amounting to states within the state, must in the end be resolved either by the complete suppression of freedom, as in the totalitarian states, or by the dissolution of class divisions in a society where the possession of money will have ceased to carry with it the power to exploit men as if the labour power inherent in them was a commodity to be bought and sold. Meanwhile the right of labour to free association is subject only to the condition that it must not be abused, as, for example, it is undoubtedly abused when the general strike is put like a pistol to the head of the community. Labour's right in this matter is bound up with the consideration that the human factor should take precedence of the material factor. Now the human factor is labour, while the dominating material factor is money, and so long as the anonymous and overwhelming power of money can be exercised by the few to coerce and exploit the many the free association of workers remains a just and necessary means of defending their elementary rights.

We may at this stage discuss briefly what we consider should be the relationship between a functional economy and the political state. The most radical solution, which we have heard put forward from time to time here in Ireland, is the one which would dispense with the political state altogether. The proposal is to substitute representation solely by professions for the present system of political representation by territorial constituencies. Those who advocate this course claim that it would at one stroke and at the same time bring to an end the abuse of party politics and secure a much more efficient and representative system of government than the present political one. Now there can be no doubt about the sordid and stagnant state of party politics in Ireland. The further we get from the unity generated by the struggle against England the more professionalised our politics become. And, strange to say, the further the civil war recedes the more our politicians insist on their differences with a certain frenzy, so much so that in the event of evenly balanced parties the party system is threatened with a deadlock. Consequently, any proposal calculated to prevent or break that deadlock merits consideration. Unfortunately, the proposed remedy could only have the effect of accentuating the disease. It is, to begin with, false in principle because parliament so constituted would be simply an outgrowth of the economic system, and any solution by which politics is swallowed up in economics is contrary to human nature. At bottom it is essentially of the same character as the communist solution which treats men as an economic animal, economics as an absolute, and religion, culture and politics as by-products of the economic process. The notion that economics is the be all and end all of human existence passed from the English utilitarians to Marx. The union of Marx's Jewish apocalyptic idealism and English materialism produced communism. Actually, utilitarian economics is communism at its crudest, and as against it it is necessary to insist that there are aspects of life which are independent of and more important than economics.

The second objection to government entirely in terms of profession is that so far from eliminating the abuses incident to party politics, it could only have the effect of multiplying much more serious abuses, and that in any case such a system could only be workable within the framework of dictatorship. Political parties are constituted on a

basis of citizenship, and apart from mere freak parties their programmes must necessarily seek to express the needs and sentiments of the people as a whole. No matter how corrupted they may be, they will at least keep up the pretence of putting national before party interests. On the other hand, the members of a professional parliament will necessarily act first and foremost on behalf of the particular economic interests they represent and national considerations will come second with them. It follows that the rivalries of economic groups within parliament are not likely to be less stubborn or pernicious than those which have brought the present political party system into deserved discredit. What is certain is that there would be more and not less rivalry than at present. For instead of two or three major political parties competing with one another for political power as at present, there would then be a multiplicity of groups, fighting for their separate interests. One may well imagine that the outcome would be more like pandemonium than parliament.

Moreover even if we suppose the members of an economic or occupational parliament to be endowed with a highly developed sense of national responsibility, it by no means follows that the representatives of one occupation are most competent to deal with the problems of another, much less to deal with the questions of culture, national defence or foreign policy which must always remain the primary concern of a national parliament. It is true that some Catholic sociologists of the last century, notably Du Pin, advocated the abolition of political parliament in favour of a parliament elected by guilds. But the guilds Du Pin had in mind were communities in miniature rather than economic groups. Times have changed and have made it very difficult if not impossible to create social organisms such as these, so that one may conjecture that if Du Pin were alive to-day he would probably take the same view as his friend De Mun who held that political power and professional interests are best kept separate.

The more one considers the proposal for a functional parliament the less feasible it seems to be, and the more difficult it is to believe in the magic by which it is preserved from the evils of the party system, and by which it is enabled to discharge political and economic functions with equal efficiency. Nothing could be plainer than that it must be subject to a higher political authority. What then is this authority to be? It cannot be the political parliament based on the multi-party system. That has been *ex hypothesi* abolished. Therefore

dictatorship is the only alternative left. In short, where an economic parliament functions in the absence or to the exclusion of parliament constituted from political parties such an economic parliament resolves itself simply into the economic agent of a one-party or totalitarian state dictatorship.

We are really back again at the point reached earlier in our discussion—the point at which we noted that a balance of powers and institutions rather than their mechanical unification is the means by which liberty and authority can best be brought into harmony. The aim of functional organisation is, as I have already pointed out, not to usurp the place of the political parliamentary state but to relieve it from an excess of functions, especially of those economic functions which it is of its nature unfitted to perform. For these reasons any considerable overlapping of political and economic activity is to be avoided. The respective spheres of jurisdiction need to be carefully delimited. The economic function, sovereign in its own sphere, must not trespass in the field of politics where the higher and more general interests of the nation are dealt with.

A central controlling council or authority would, of course, eventually be required for the purpose of guiding the activity of functional groups. A council of professions or general economic council are amongst the means suggested for meeting this need. Into this aspect of the question I do not propose to enter. It seems unnecessary to start troubling about the roof of a house before its foundations have been laid. There is, however, one direction in which a start might be made. Having due regard to the essential differences of economic and political activities, the second house of parliament might with advantage be utilised as a semi-functional body. In this capacity, it could do much to promote the development of functional groups, while at the same time serving as a connecting link between such groups and the state. The principle of functional or vocational organisation has been enshrined in the Senate clauses of the new Constitution of Ireland. Unfortunately, one may assert without the least trace of cynicism that where politicians are concerned the gap between principle and practice has ever been notoriously wide. It will be interesting to see what steps are taken towards implementing this functional principle. One difficulty is that every person entering the Senate from a functional or vocational organisation in any real sense of the word thereby ousts a politician of some sort, and

politicians are notoriously reluctant to give way any of their authority or to share the sweets of office with those who are not pledged politicians. It has been argued that the materials for a functional Senate are at present lacking, and so Article 19 of the Constitution must remain a dead letter until properly organised groups have been brought into existence. The argument fails to carry any conviction whatever. The truth is that there are any number of organisations and associations sufficiently developed to serve as a starting point. Any one who refers to pages thirty to thirty-three of the minority report of the Senate Commission will find a full recognition of the fact that although a complete functional basis does not exist at present, nevertheless the elements of functional organisation are sufficiently widespread to make possible the constitution of a Senate on functional lines. The main thing is to make a start. Unfortunately our social philosophy is to such a large extent a backwash of the British occupation that we have largely lost the capacity of acting for ourselves and have thus acquired the habit of waiting on state action. It rests therefore with the state to make the first move, and by its action or inaction in this vital matter of functional development may be judged the quality of Irish statesmanship.

V

WORKERS' DEMOCRACY

IF there is any one question more than another uppermost in the minds of wage-earners throughout our modern westernised world it is, I submit, the question why work and ownership should be more often than not separated, why they who perform the work should not also own the means by which it is performed? Or otherwise stated, why should wealth rather than work be the deciding factor in the ownership of the instruments of production and in the division of the profits that accrue from their use? This anomaly may have existed in all previous civilizations but seldom or ever has it existed in a more universal form, and certainly never have men been more keenly conscious of the injustice upon which such a division of work and ownership is based. Indeed one may say without exaggeration that any social programme, whether collectivist or otherwise, that does not establish a real and living correspondence between work and ownership is doomed to failure in the long run. It is idle to deny the urgency of the problem. For the outstanding fact about modern society is the conflict of interest and the mutual antagonism which exists between the class of wage-earners on the one hand and the money-owning, propertied class on the other. In proportion as society becomes industrialised the gap between these two classes widens; their opposition becomes inveterate, with the eventual outcome of latent or open class war, ending, as we may see from contemporary examples, in the deeper enslavement of the vast majority of workers. Schemes of social reform may avert social revolution by lessening the tension between these classes; they may provide safety valves and lightning conductors, but if the class structure of society remains intact, explosive forces will continue to accumulate, and sooner or later will result in a new cycle of revolutions, probably having as their outcome the deeper enslavement of the workers. One thing seems certain. Least of all will the wage-earners be satisfied with

social makeshifts, at least as long as they are in a position to express their dissatisfaction. All such remedies will appear to them as designed by the possessing class for the express purpose of putting them to sleep, so that they may be the more effectively, and, at the same time, inexpensively exploited.

The question at issue is not a question of economics only. If economic efficiency were to be the sole consideration, a strong case might be made for the complete suppression of individual freedom and responsibility and the establishment of an economic dictatorship. Essentially, the question goes deeper than economics. It involves simple, concrete justice. If we accept the postulates on which our civilization is supposed to be based, it seems intrinsically unjust that although all men are equal as citizens, yet one set of men should through the mere action of wealth be enabled to exploit the majority of their fellowmen. For my own part I am convinced that most workers, including those who call themselves Marxists, have little understanding and less interest in the incredibly obscure metaphysics of communism. It is true that intellectual snobbery has played no small part in the drift of middle class intellectuals into the Marxist camp. But clearly the average worker has little in common with the communism of the revolutionary rich. What has assured communism of a universal hearing is the sense of injustice aroused in intelligent workers by their everyday experience of the brute fact that, although politically one man is as good as another, socially and economically life is organised almost entirely for the benefit of the man with money. Now, of all forms of privilege wealth is the least tolerable. There have been royal saints and heroes. Aristocracy of blood has often gone with aristocracy of spirit. But the millionaire saint or hero has yet to be born. And nobody knows this better than the worker living in a world that grovels before all the symbols of wealth and success.

In the Greece of Aristotle the working man was, we may suppose, resigned to slavery as men will always resign themselves to what they consider to be inevitable. Thanks to the action of Christianity during the past two thousand years, there is all the difference in the world between his attitude and that of the modern worker, who, if he were asked *what he is*, might reply in the words of the Abbé Siéyès "nothing," and to the question *what he should be*, might reply: "everything."

All the signs are that civilization has now reached such a state that only the most far-reaching remedies are likely to be of much avail. In this context it will not be out of place to note that modern history might have taken a very different turning and the world to-day might well be a much happier place to live in if only Christians had taken to heart the social teaching of the great churchmen and Popes¹ of the 19th century. When communism was still in its cradle and industrialism still in its infancy, the great German Bishop, Ketteler, and later that great Pontiff, Leo XIII., diagnosed with marvellous insight the evils from which European civilization was perishing and proposed clear and practical remedies for these evils, especially in the social order. Their appeal to the conscience of Christian Europe went for the most part unheeded. Apart from individual Catholics the majority of the

¹ There was a time in which the assimilation of socialism to christianity was a real possibility. The pioneers of French socialism took as the point of departure of their criticism of society the New Testament. They began by appealing to christian ideals of love and fraternity, Saint Simon as vigorously as Enfantin, Fourier as distinctly as Pierre Leroux and Cabet. The doctrine of class struggle which finally imposed itself on the whole socialist movement was mainly English in origin. Marx, with whom that doctrine is commonly associated, owed more to English economists than to German philosophers. The struggle of individuals, of classes, of species—struggle or conflict as the first law of life—is in its present form a distinctively British product. In fact, Malthus was the first to formulate the notion of natural selection by nature's pruning knife; the same idea underlies economic individualism, as elaborated by such representative economists as Ricardo and Jeremy Bentham. With Darwin, who by the way acknowledges his indebtedness to Malthus (*Origin of Species*) (1885) p. 50), the idea of creative strife passes from sociology to biology, and thence emerges as the root idea of the entire modern epoch. Already in Darwin's time, Herbert Spencer applies on an universal scale the notion of a struggle for existence, leading to the elimination of the unfit and the survival of the fittest, so that it is the effective agent of all progress.

The new world-view with its emphasis on survival at any cost and by any means, however ruthless—the more ruthless the more efficacious—involved, it is plain to be seen, a radical negation of all ethical values, and as a corollary an utter contempt for the human personality which in effect was reduced to the same level as the rest of the animal creation. The human being ceases to be, properly speaking, a personality in any lasting or autonomous sense, if only because in the struggle for existence it is a case of *homo homini lupus*. Socialism, which in the long run had everything to lose by the negation of the idea of justice, might have been expected to resist the infection of the new doctrine. But unfortunately under the influence of Marx the notion of a struggle of classes was imported into the socialist philosophy. The idea was in part an extension of the liberal idea of the struggle of individuals and in part a result of the new biology, but in any case its net effect was the social darwinism which permeates modern communism. It was an evil day, most of all for the working class, when the socialist movement thus abandoned the New Testament for *The Origin of Species*.

educated had eyes and ears only for Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and like prophets of the Darwinian animal struggle for power for whose aberrations humanity has already paid a heavy price in blood and cruelty and tyranny, and for which the full price has not yet been paid. This transition, given the wholesale apostasy of intellectuals, was perhaps inevitable. But it is remarkable what little resistance was shown by Christians. For Europe was still ostensibly Christian up to the close of the 19th century. This being so, it is hard to see how Christians can be acquitted of all blame for the greatest tragedy of modern times, the apostasy of the masses under the influence of these false prophets of the 19th century and the still more pernicious influence of the intellectual middle-men and purveyors of their ideas. There have been so many apostasies from the authentic tradition of Graeco-Roman and Christian civilization that we have long ceased to notice them or to understand the vile consequences that have sprung from them. It is amid the wreckage, not of Christianity, but of humanitarianism that European man lives to-day. For it was not to be expected that belief in man would long survive the loss of belief in God. If in Ireland we may look to the future with a greater degree of optimism than most of our fellow Europeans, it is precisely because we have not yet fully conformed to contemporary European standards, because the well-nigh irresistible forces which are propelling western man towards some obscure destiny are as yet at some distance from us. There are still great reserves of religious faith and unspoiled imaginative energy on which we can draw. Problems, cultural and social, difficult, if not impossible, of solution elsewhere, do not exist for us or else exist in such a simple form as to be capable of swift and accurate solutions. The future depends on our ability to forestall forces and events which, if we are inactive, will surely overtake and overwhelm us as they have already overwhelmed the greater part of Christendom. Next to the cultural, the social problem is for us the most immediate and pressing. And the social problem begins and ends with the workers.

Returning to the particular problem of workers' ownership we find, in the first place, that there is nothing in religion or philosophy which obliges us to regard common ownership as intrinsically wrong or undesirable in practice, though we are obliged for social purposes to regard common ownership as inferior and subsidiary to private

individual ownership. This follows from the principle that personal ownership for use is the highest form of ownership. Ownership is as near perfection as it is possible for it to be where the worker is also the owner, where, for example, a farmer works as well as owns his farm or a craftsman the instruments of his craft. Why this exclusive emphasis on private property, it may be asked? Because almost the most important thing about a man is his work, and his work is not *his* in any full sense unless he is responsible for it. Now his responsibility, which is the measure of his freedom, will be at the maximum when the instruments of his work are his own and can be used by him as he thinks best. Personal liberty is obviously very much a matter of variety of personal choice. The wider the field for the exercise of personal choice, the greater the amount of personal liberty. In other words, when work and ownership correspond, so that one implies the other, then a man will be largely his own master in the whole of his working life, and his capacity for exercising personal choice and initiative will be at the maximum.

Moreover, work is a title to ownership, since it is a primary form of self-expression and self-development. What a man creates is, in a real sense, an extension of his being. But creative activity in any real sense is inseparable from the exercise of personal will, judgement and initiative. Hence it follows that where work is dissociated from personal initiative, as it tends to be in the conditions of machine and mass production, a man may work without creating. He is the slave of the machine. Or alternatively where he has no say in the nature of his work and is obliged to conform to an imposed pattern, his activity resembles that of an automaton. Here I may be stating the extreme case against modern industrial production. Nevertheless, these considerations help to bring out the importance of private property. For with the progressive elimination of individual property is eliminated an essential condition and safeguard of human freedom. The whole modern mechanised centralised type of industrial civilization makes inevitably for the suppression of local and individual initiative, robs the average worker of any share in the means of production, leaves him little or no initiative as to their use, and, as a consequence, tends to stereotype his working existence in automatic and subhuman terms.

I wonder do we realise how fortunate we are in this respect. We in Ireland have not yet experienced the impact of modern industrialism

on a large scale. Our economy still turns on the peasant farmer. Property is still highly divided in town as well as in country. If it be true that the small business, with a peasant proprietorship, is the necessary backbone of a free country, the best training ground for character and the best safeguard of the variety of life, we in Ireland have reason to be grateful. Here, as yet, there is no great concentration of economic power, outside Dublin no extremes of wealth and poverty, few or none of the glaring disparities of fortune which in other countries inflame revolutionary passions. It is true that our good fortune in this respect need not be attributed to any inherent virtue in the national character, nor to the exercise of any special foresight on the part of ourselves or of our forefathers. It just happens that we are more than half a century behind the times. Indirectly the British did us a good turn when they neglected to industrialise us. But it would be a mistake to rely on the negative immunity which we have enjoyed as a consequence of British misgovernment. The malady which is now on the point of destroying civilization in any sense in which that word is worth using, has definitely commenced to attack us, as is evident from the cinema infested condition of our cities, the increasing vulgarisation of outlook even in the countryside, and the assimilation on all hands of a cosmopolitanism that must in the end poison our national existence at its source.

For our purpose property falls roughly into the following groups: (1) privately owned and worked property; (2) public property under state or municipal control; (3) semi-private property of the sort held by limited liability or joint stock companies. The first need not concern us here. If it be true that small-scale individually owned and worked property is the *sine qua non* of a free polity we should count ourselves singularly favoured as compared with most other countries in this respect. As I have already said, we are in the happy position of having as the basis of our economy a system of widespread private property.

As regards property under state or municipal control, its range is already fairly wide and is bound to become wider. The most notable and recent example of the extension of public ownership is the Shannon Electricity Service. There is no reason why the method of public ownership should not also be applied to such services as, for example, the railways and banks. In his recent book, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, J. M. Keynes, though

not a socialist, argues in favour of the socialisation of credit and investment. The case he makes has not been refuted by economists in the classical tradition of free capitalism. Where enterprises exist to serve the community as a whole, it is just and necessary that they should be brought under social and, if necessary, central control. There is an overwhelming case for public ownership in cases such as these. This necessity is clearly recognised in *Quadragesimo Anno*, which attaches to the primary right of private ownership the following qualification : "It is rightly contended that certain forms of property must be reserved to the State, since they carry with them an opportunity of domination too great to be left to private individuals without injury to the community at large."

The truth is, of course, that such forms of property are no longer amenable to private ownership. Here a most important reservation needs to be made. It does not follow that because certain forms of property are more amenable to public than to private ownership they should forthwith be nationalised and placed under a government department, which would be responsible to parliament for both policy and management. An important distinction must be made between state control and state supervision. It is all the more important to emphasise this distinction since bureaucratic planners of all sorts ignore it in their eagerness to make civil servants of us all. Where economic services are concerned much the safest and, in most cases, the most efficient method of public ownership is that which combines state supervision with functional autonomy and management. The natural role of parliament is to exercise that sort of general supervision of policy and finance exercised, for example, by our own parliament over the Electricity Supply Board or by the British Parliament in the case of such corporations as the British Broadcasting Corporation, the London Transport Board and the Central Electricity Board. On the other hand, when the State goes directly into business, politics become mixed with economics, which is neither good for one or the other, so that in the long run the choice usually will be between more inefficiency or more dictatorial and bureaucratic government. In either case the individual citizen is less free and his last state will probably be worse than his first.

There are two pitfalls particularly to be avoided in connection with the extension of public ownership. One is the danger of public

property encroaching on private property and eventually eating it up altogether. This is a real danger. For all forms of power have an inherent tendency to expand at the expense of their opposites. If the weight of social forces is behind public ownership, the community will soon find itself borne irresistibly towards the homogeneous or totalitarian type of state. The only safe rule therefore is to treat public ownership as exceptional and to insist on private ownership as the normal and necessary state of ownership. The other danger to be avoided in the inherent tendency of the management of public services to harden along bureaucratic lines, and, as a consequence, the tendency of conditions of employment to become fixed to the disadvantage of the lower grade of workers. Each worker has his status fixed like that of a civil servant. Fixity of status has its drawbacks as well as its advantages. We can see, for example, that civil servants are meticulously classed and graded, the upper divisions being almost closed to the lower. Such hard and fast divisions may work tolerably well in administrative services, but in economic and social services they are less justified and are, in fact, calculated to prejudice the rights of workers in general. Some means, therefore, must be found of bridging these divisions, of opening up opportunities of advancement from below, of diminishing the extreme inequalities that exist between the conditions of employment of the minority in the upper grades and the majority in the lower grades of public services. The levelling down or, if the financial resources of the community permit, the levelling up of incomes is one means towards this end. Another and more effective means would undoubtedly be the organisation of public services, other than direct governmental services, on a functional basis.

There is nothing revolutionary about these suggestions. All that is proposed is the further extension of social and central controls, involving, no doubt, a large extension of the traditional functions of government. But the methods to be employed are methods with which people are already familiar and which are already widely in use here as elsewhere. So far as we are concerned, the real crux arises when we consider what should be our policy in regard to the numerous industries and concerns owned and managed as joint-stock companies. Of these enterprises it has been said, with a considerable show of reason, that they do not represent private property in any real sense of that term ; that they are, in fact, concerns owned by

shareholders collectively and worked by wage-earners collectively. Here we have something approaching a complete separation of work and ownership, so much so that a strong case might be made out for the view that *what really exists behind a facade of private property is the worst type of collectivism*. The remedy proposed by some who hold this view is a simple though drastic one. Let the shareholders be liquidated or bought out and the ownership of such enterprises transferred to the workers engaged in them. Those who advocate this remedy confidently claim that the result will be the establishment of effective democracy and workers' self-government in industry, and thus the disappearance of the nightmare of lawless capitalism and unemployment from the life of the ordinary working man.

The proposal wears an enchanting air of simplicity, and, indeed, has gone to some of the strongest heads with intoxicating effect. Unfortunately, human affairs are highly complicated ; the implementation of the idea of workers' ownership bristles with difficulties. The first point to be noted is that the advocates of workers' ownership usually think in terms of industrialised communities, and so for them workers' ownership carries with it for all practical purposes the abolition of private ownership, except, perhaps, for a small residue in agriculture. However they may differ as to the appropriate means of organising workers' groups—whether in small or large units—they are at one in accepting the coming of a collectivist society as inevitable. Now proposals in favour of collectivism cannot be worked out *in vacuo*. We must take them in their contemporary context. Consequently, we are not justified in ignoring the lessons of the contemporary Russian experiment in collectivism. What have been its results ?

At the outset of the Russian revolution the industrial workers took over lock, stock and barrel the enterprises in which they worked. For a few months they experienced the novelty of owning and managing things for themselves—with what success we need not now consider. What we do know is that within less than a year the state dictatorship took the control of industrial concerns out of the hands of the workers and established instead a system of bureaucratic management. Immediately the workers reverted, minus the protection of their trade unions, to the position of wage-earners under a *régime* of state socialism far more oppressive and dictatorial than anything they had experienced under individualistic capitalism. In this

context let me quote the following passage from Aldous Huxley's recent book, *Ends and Means* :—" Collective ownership of the means of production does not have as its necessary and unconditional result the liberation of those who have hitherto been bondsmen. Collective ownership of the means of production is perfectly compatible, as we see in contemporary Russia, with authoritarian management of factories and farms, with militarised education and conscription, with the rule of a dictator, supported by an oligarchy of party men and making use of a privileged bureaucracy, a censored press and a huge force of secret police. Collective ownership of the means of production certainly delivers the workers from their servitude to many petty dictators—landlords, money-lenders, factory owners, and the like. But if the contexts of this intrinsically desirable reform are intrinsically undesirable, then the result will be not responsible freedom for the workers, but another form of passive and irresponsible bondage. Delivered from servitude to many small dictators, they will find themselves under the control of the agents of a single centralised dictatorship, more effective than the old, because it wields the material powers and is backed by the almost divine prestige of the national state."

It will be noted that although a believer in collectivism, Mr. Huxley repudiates the Russian and state socialist brand of collectivism, for the simple and sufficient reason that where collective ownership is centralised it makes little difference to the individual worker whether the industry in which he is working is owned by the socialist or the capitalist state. In either case, the result will be very much the same as far as he is concerned ; his degree of ownership will be negligible, and he will spend the whole of his working life as the subject of an absolute despot. The best that he can hope for is that the despotism will be a benevolent one. In short, common or collective ownership is a travesty of workers' ownership if the control of the economic process is centred in the hands of a ruling oligarchy, calling itself the state. In this criticism of state collectivism, Mr. Huxley is demonstrably right. His way out of the difficulty is decentralised collectivism ; the creation of small and, more or less, self-governing groups of workers. And undoubtedly if we want to make workers' ownership a reality we should aim at some such system of small self-governing industries. But what Mr. Huxley has failed to appreciate or at least does not

sufficiently take into account, is that without a framework of widespread private property it is all but inevitable that workers' groups will lose their autonomy and economic power re-concentrate in the hands of a ruling oligarchy. Before developing this point further, it is necessary to advert to the claim that state collectivism comes to much the same thing as workers' ownership. For one Mr. Huxley, who candidly repudiates that claim, there are scores of socialist or communist writers, who, taking their cue from Moscow or from complacent bureaucrats like the Webbs, are never tired of celebrating the triumph of the working class in Soviet Russia.

The first point to be considered is whether collective ownership automatically involves workers' ownership. This is the tacit assumption underlying Marxism and, indeed, most schemes of socialism. The assumption is a fallacious one. For if we consider the notion of collective ownership we must come to the conclusion that either it is wholly meaningless or involves a contradiction in terms. Where nobody owns anything, everybody owns everything. That is the *reductio ad absurdum* inherent in the notion of collective ownership. Let us consider the most ideal case imaginable. Let us suppose that the Marxian dream of a stateless society were to come true; that there was no longer any need for the state because there was no longer any need for compulsion, and that finally, to use the classic communist formula, the state were to wither away, leaving a society of free producers. The question is whether under these ideal conditions all forms of property will be held equally and in common. The answer must plainly be that no such thing is possible. It is only possible on the assumption that a society of men is ultimately of the same order as a society of ants or bees. During the past century sociologists have been busy hunting for mechanical or biological models of society. But for all the play they have made with abstractions such as the collectivity, the social organism, they have notably failed to prove any analogy between the rational and volitional activity of human beings and the instinctive and automatic activity that characterises insect societies. Social theories based on analogies taken from biology or mechanistic materialism are entirely worthless and irrelevant in the human order. It has been said with justice that the sense of personality, of being a separate person, is the most vivid and fundamental sense that we possess. No amount of theorising about men as constituent cells of a social organism can stand against the concrete

human experience that men are distinct and separate from one another, spiritually as well as physically. From this we make the important inference that we cannot and do not hold things in common. We hold things separately. What is called common ownership works out in each particular case as the share each man possesses in the common stock. Given conditions of perfect equality, were all the workers in a society collectively to own each factory, mine, farm, machine or other factor of production, it would be none the less impossible to attribute to them the common ownership of these things. What we would have, in fact, would be an equal sharing or division of things among members of the community. Granted perfect equality, the share of each individual worker would, therefore, be proportionate to the number of workers and their dependents. In Soviet Russia, for example, estimating the population at about 160 millions, the share of each individual worker would work out roughly at a 160th millionth part of the common stock.

I need hardly remark that the case we have been considering is a purely imaginary one, and such a sharing of things is physically and morally impossible. Russia affords us a perfect example of what a society organised on a collectivist basis is bound to be. 'So far from the state having withered away in Russia, it has swollen to monstrous proportions ; its appetite has grown correspondingly, so that what is euphemistically called collective ownership reduces itself in practice into ownership by a minority of bureaucrats who take the lion's share of the spoils, leaving the bare bones to the ordinary working man. His lot is not in any way improved by the fact that his exploiters exploit him in the name of the state. Why should we allow ourselves to be duped by yhrases ? What in the last analysis is a state ? It is nothing but a government ; and a government is nothing else than a group of people. It is a matter of considerable importance to be on our guard against such large abstract terms as the " state," " society," the " collectivity." As Huxley remarks, the political philosophies which make most play with such large abstract words have generally been philosophies intended to justify a tyranny, " either military-capitalist-feudal, like the tyranny of Hegel's Prussia and Hitler's Third Reich, or military-state-socialist-bureaucratic, like that of Russia after the death of Lenin." The master, then, of the average Russian and German is not some mysterious divinity, calling itself the state or the proletariat, but some other man or group of men whose

title to power does not derive from their superior culture or morality but rather from their complete contempt for these values and from the skill with which they manage to combine in the manner of Machiavelli's Prince the strength of the lion and the cunning of the fox.

The doctrine of collectivism, as elaborated from Marx to Lenin and from Hegel to Rosenberg, is a remarkable example of fraudulent mysticism, a social pantheism, of the same character and ancestry as Rousseau's doctrine of the *general will*. Each person, in the theory of Rousseau's *Social Contract*, in obeying all, obeys only himself. Each worker, according to the collectivist pre-supposition, in owning nothing, owns everything. The consideration of such mystifications would be waste of time were it not that despite their absurdity we find ourselves confronted with them at every hand's turn and on every level of the modern mystery religions of the collectivity, the race, and the state. Considered from a strictly practical standpoint the case against generalised collectivism might be put in a sentence ; where everybody owns everything, nobody owns anything. Now, such an absence or a negation of ownership is not practically possible. Somebody must own in the sense that somebody must exercise effective control over the use of the instruments of production. In other words, effective ownership there must be by some person or group of persons. This being so, collectivism involves the loss of ownership by the vast majority and its exclusive acquisition by a ruling oligarchy. A generalised collectivism, as Hilaire Belloc pointed out many years ago, is the slave state in action. Lacking a fixed principle of truth or authority the history of the last century has been a series of wild stampedes from one extreme to the other, first frantic individualism, now cast-iron collectivism, but never a thought for the saving truth that human affairs are too complex for unitary solutions ; that in a balance and admixture of ideas and institutions lies the sole possibility of reconciling human liberty with social discipline.

The arguments against collectivism are not arguments against workers' ownership. On the contrary, one of the reasons why collectivism is unacceptable is because, in fact, it represents the final stage in the enslavement of the workers. Consideration of these points does, however, bring out clearly that workers' ownership is valid only in a certain social setting ; that beyond a certain point, it is entirely fictitious. It is so easy to "go all out" for simple unitary

solutions, for absolute capitalism or absolute collectivism. It saves one the trouble of thinking. But if we stop to think for a moment we must recognise that variety and degree are of the very essence of civilization. After all, it is by degree that things are good or bad, true or false. The most pernicious errors will be found in most cases to consist either in the overstatement or the under-statement of a truth. According to the amount administered, strychnine is a medicine or a poison.

The case for workers' ownership has recently been argued by Eric Gill, the well-known Catholic sculptor and writer. The terms of his argument may be summarised as follows : Modern civilization is absolutely committed to the present system of mechanised industrial production. This system does not permit of individual ownership. In reality, industrial enterprises are owned collectively by the shareholders with the object of production for profit. Therefore, for justice sake the ownership of such enterprises should be transferred from the shareholders to the workers engaged in them and worked and managed by them collectively. This statement of the case is true only up to a point. It over-simplifies the issue, makes some gratuitous assumptions, and, above all, is vitiated by a fundamental oversight. To leave out of account the numerous small-scale industrial enterprises individually owned and worked that are to be found not only in favoured countries such as our own, Switzerland and Holland, but also in highly industrialised England, is to over-simplify the issue. Furthermore, the assumption that the present trend of industrial development is irreversible is an assumption without any foundation in reason or in experience. Who can say what will happen in the next hundred years ? Unless we are determinists we must believe in the freedom of the will and, in consequence, in the power of man to shape his destiny. There is no more ludicrous practice, it seems to me, than that which consists in dealing with the present on the basis of what is to happen in the future. The farcical figure of H. G. Wells, prophet of the past as well as of the future, ought to be a sufficient warning against the folly of dogmatising about the future. Strictly speaking, the essence of what is new is that it cannot be predicted. If it were predictable, it would not be new. Without going back more than a hundred years, it would be easy to multiply examples of history confounding the fatalists. Marx, for example, claimed for historical materialism the same precision as the science:

of astronomy, and yet his calculations left out the one factor which was to make nonsense of his predictions. That factor was fascism, which, strictly speaking, in his theory had no right to exist, but when the time came there it was all the same. Who, for example, could have predicted a half-century ago the resurrection of Poland, the rise of an obscure oriental state like Japan to the rank of a world power, the staging of the first Communist revolution in Russia, or coming nearer home, the achievement of the large measure of national independence we achieved in a few short years? As a matter of fact, a strong case might be made out for the likelihood that the next century will see the present process of industrialised mechanised collectivism reversed, or at least its direction radically altered. It is hard to see how the present industrial system can survive the shock of another Great War. Why, then, should we assume, as Mr. Gill seems to assume, that there is no escape from the vicious circle of competitive collectivism and war, when most of the facts suggest that the modern world must either find a way out or perish? That being so, one need not be a blind optimist to believe in an eventual return to the conditions of a sane and free civilization.

So much for the gratuitous assumptions made by Mr. Gill. Whether true or false they do not affect the force of his argument in favour of workers' ownership. What does affect his argument is the major omission or oversight which, to my mind, vitiates his whole conception of the problem. It is to the credit of Mr. Huxley that never for a moment does he lose sight of the fact that concentration of economic power is incompatible with the assertion of workers' rights. On the other hand, with Mr. Gill the notion of workers' ownership seems to be to such an extent an *idée fixe* that he can give no thought to the qualifications or limits to its operation. At any rate, he fails to make the necessary distinction between state collectivism and workers' ownership made over and over again by Mr. Huxley, while, in common with Mr. Huxley, he ignores the still more fundamental consideration that in the absence of widespread private property workers' groups cannot long continue to exist but must inevitably merge in one another and finally merge in a system of state ownership. With these necessary reservations the case made by Mr. Gill for workers' ownership seems to me to be just and practicable. Undoubtedly industrial enterprises no longer amenable to individual private ownership are, in fact, collectives on a capitalistic basis, and if

collective ownership there is, and must be, in the present stage of social development, then clearly it is preferable from every point of view that enterprises of this sort should be owned and managed by men who work them. But if such enterprises are to remain workers' concerns they must possess real self-government; in short, they must possess a high degree of autonomy. Otherwise, what is called workers' ownership is only a polite fiction disguising a bureaucratic system in which work and ownership is even more radically divorced than under individualistic capitalism. Does it never occur to those who repeat the parrot cries of collectivism that from the moment the control of an enterprise passes from the workers actually engaged in it into the hands of some external authority, as far as the workers are concerned, they are back into the position of passive wage-earners? And when this occurs in one concern, it is only a matter of time until it will occur in all. Thus the rapid reversion of workers to a state of servitude is all but inevitable unless there are other factors sufficiently strong to counteract the movement towards state centralisation. Two factors are essential for this purpose. The first is the existence of widespread individually owned and worked property. The second is a frame-work of functional organisation, which shall enable separate and self-governing industrial or social groups to co-operate without suffering the loss of their autonomy. The first condition is, and always will be, the fundamental safeguard. Only widespread individual property can provide an anchorage strong enough to counteract the concentration of economic power towards which, by inclination or necessity, the modern state irresistibly inclines.

Applying these general considerations to our own situation, it is clear that we have in Ireland many industrial concerns which have ceased to conform to the standards of individual private ownership; they are, in fact, capitalist collectives on a profit-sharing basis. Moreover, there is a complete absence of co-ordination between them. It seems to me that if we want to bring about the transfer of such concerns to the workers, we would be well advised to talk less about collectivism (which has, as a matter of fact, proved itself to be the negation of workers' ownership), and more about the rights and duties of co-operative groups. On the other hand, we should not hesitate to recognise that as much as small-scale farming, small-scale industrial production is legitimate private property in so far as it is carried on

by individuals who own the instruments with which they personally work.

To Labour-men some of these ideas here propounded will, doubtless, appear temporising, half-hearted and ultra-cautious, while others will think them utopian. We may take it for granted that workers' ownership will always be dismissed by vested interests as an academic or utopian hope. We are all creatures of habit and self-interest. Our first impulse is to cling to what is familiar. Many reforms accepted by us as a matter of course to-day were violently opposed when they were first suggested largely on account of their unfamiliarity. Add to this that any reform is bound to interfere with vested interests. Thus there will always be a thousand and one reasons for leaving things as they are and opposing any radical reform no matter how intrinsically just and desirable it may be shown to be. It was in this spirit that educated Russians resigned themselves to the institution of serfdom at late as the second half of the last century, while at the same time and at the other end of the world the same moral blindness characterised the attitude of the southern planters of the United States towards negro slavery. Both were to pay dearly for their want of moral vision, the Americans of the southern states in defeat in civil war and the consequent ruin of their brilliant and promising civilisation; the descendants of the educated classes in Russia in destruction or dispersion at the hands of the Bolsheviks.

It is not suggested that the policy of workers' ownership should be applied immediately or at one stroke. Apart from its impracticability as things stand, the change over to workers' ownership had best come by gradual stages. Consequently, the situation demands a two-fold policy—a long-term policy aiming at the eventual creation of a small-scale industrial democracy on a functional and workers' basis, and, secondly, an immediate policy for the establishment of a *modus vivendi* between labour and capital. The programme of the Federation of Christian Trades' Unions lays down certain general principles, that are, to my mind, admirably adapted to the stage of evolution at which we have arrived. Let me quote from this important document:

"In the present state of social evolution the production and exchange of wealth should be organised on the basis of co-operation between employers and workers for the common good.

Labour is the living and active factor of production. Capital is itself the result of labour, and is only an auxiliary to it.

Co-operation is needed between all concerned in production, the owners of land and capital, the directors and managers of business and other classes of workers.

In a proper organisation of industry there should be a fruitful co-operation between labour and capital ; labour should share in proportion to its competence in the control of industry, and it should share, according to its contribution, in the profits."

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